

ANIKETANA

A quarterly journal of Kannada literature for English readers

KARNATAKA SAHITYA ACADEMY
BANGALORE

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(A Quarterly Journal of Kannada Literature
for English Readers)

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From the Editors

We regret the delay in placing the present volume in your hands. It could not be printed in time because of the difficulty in getting able and willing translators.

The present issue is the first of its kind in the sense that it focuses on a particular period of Kannada literature, Navodaya period. The body of writings now named 'Navodaya', having begun at the turn of the present century, spanned over half a century. The literature of this period was forged in the furnace of growing national and regional self-apprehension. It was a scene dominated by geniuses like Bendre, Kuvempu, Masti, Karanth. But it also had several little luminaries whose contribution cannot be overlooked. The net result of all this was a most impressive body of Kannada literature amazing both in quantity and quality. It was a literal 'Navodaya' or 'new birth': several new genres of literature like fiction, drama and lyrical poetry were born and came of age. In short, the new Kannada literature came into being.

We hope that the issue is representative enough as we have included in these pages some of the most precious pieces of Navodaya writing. Our selection, however, does not exhaust the many — faceted richness of the period. We have done our best to include some of the best from all genres. We deeply regret some of the omissions resulting from practical difficulties.

We have decided to focus in two of the forth coming issues on the post Navodaya period and Dalit-Bandaya. We are also hoping to devote an entire issue to a selection from the recently explored material from the oral literatures of nearly fifty sub-cultures of Kannada land about whom our Academy has brought out separate books in Kannada. All this, we hope, will provide for our readers highly fascinating reading material.

Editors.

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NAVODAYA : AN OVERVIEW

K. Narasimha Murthy

Navodaya signifies a renaissance, a new birth. It is no mean achievement that the Navodaya writers reanimated and gave a new thrust and direction to a tradition that had become for a couple of centuries in the recent past decadent and moribund. This they did by viewing our more than a millennium old tradition in the light of modern sensibility and thinking and identifying what from their point of view were growth points at which fruitful contact could be established for the creation of a literature relevant to modern times. They profited a great deal no doubt by the example of the developments that had taken place especially in the Romantic period in English literature. They found there new models, new genres and new metrical forms. It redounds greatly to the credit of the Navodaya men that they evolved new metrical forms from our own past metrical structures so that modern poetry was a continuation in a straight line of our earlier poetic tradition. Similarly the new fiction, long and short, as well as dramatic forms grew out of Indian models, folklore and classical, though definitely influenced by these genres as practised in the west. Navodaya, thus, modernised our tradition and with its rich crop of literary creations can very well be compared with earlier epochs of Kannada literature like the age of Pampa and Ranna, or the age of Harihara and the Vachanakara's or the period of Kumaravyasa, Lakshmisha and Ratnakaravarni and the Kirthanakara's.

Among their discoveries and new developments pride of place goes to prose fiction, long and short and drama. Other significant developments they can claim credit for are metrical forms like blank verse and the sonnet. Their critical appreciation comprising the assimilation of the western practice as well as the continuation of interest in the Sanskritic tradition embraced both classical and folk literatures.

In Bendre and Kuvempu we have an outstanding lyric poet and an outstanding epic poet. What a rich variety even in the form of the epic we have achieved during this period can be seen by comparing 'Sri Rama Darsanam' with 'Sriharicharita' of Pu.Thi. Narasimachar, 'Sri Rama Pattabhisheka' of Masti and 'Bharatasindhu Rashmi' of Gokak. To think of Bendre is to think of poems like 'Jogi' as to think of Kuvempu is to think of poems like 'Kalki' and to think of Pu.Thi.Na is to think of poems like 'Neralu'. Other unique poets are Narashimhaswamy with his celebration of conjugal love, Rajarathnam with his dialectal compositions and D.V.G. with his compendium of observations on life. In Masti we have a narrative poet of eminence as his 'Navarathri' and other narrative poems demonstrate. Another unique work is Govinda Pai's 'Golgotha'.

Poetic drama tackling transcendental issues and prose comedies presenting social criticism have both flourished. Masterpieces of poetic drama like 'Aswaththaman', 'Beralge Koral', 'Yasodhara', 'Gokula Nirgamana' and 'Ahalya' have no counterparts in later literature. We have in Samsa a real genius of a historical dramatist. In social comedy we have two great masters in Kailasam and Sriranga. In his 'Kakankote', Masti has produced a unique tribal play. Navodaya established a dramatic tradition where there was none before.

It is in the Navodaya period for the first time that we see the development of prose literature in the language. Not only was a work

man like prose developed as a suitable vehicle for scientific and social thinking and for exchange of ideas in general but prose for creative expression in the form of fiction, long and short, also came to be forged. The novel which has largely replaced the epic in the modern age has been found to be an apt form for depicting the social conditions, probing the individual psyche and in general presenting an illuminating image of an age. Navodaya has produced such masterpieces of long fiction as Karanth's 'Marali Mannige', Kuvempu's 'Malegalalli Madumagalu', Rao Bahadur's 'Gramayana' and Bhyrappa's 'Grihabhanga'. The novel as a form has been found congenial by large numbers of emerging women writers and there have been notable works like Indira's 'Phaniyamma'. Living conditions in the north and the south as well as on the coast, in urban as well as rural mileu's and at the level of all classes of society have found a mirror in the Navodaya novel. Not only have these novels given aesthetic pleasure and provided pleasant reading to one and all but they have interpreted the present in the perspective of the historical and the mythical past and presented a criticism of life in depth.

Like the lyric, the short story was one of the forms to be developed at the earliest stage. We have Masti a writer whose rich corpus of short stories not only mirrors the life of all the sections of society but presents at the same time a wholesome and comprehensive philosophic outlook on life. Many of his stories have stood the test of time and have revealed to succeeding generations unexpectedly modern strategies in the art of story-telling. Other fine writers in the field like Kuvempu, Ananda, Gorur, Aswatha and Triveni have made valuable contributions.

A similar genre to the lyric and the short story is the essay. We have in Murthy Rao one of the most charming and delighful practitioners of the art.

There are three more areas in which Navodaya has done notable work-criticism, children's literature and humorous literature. Navodaya criticism has opened up access to folk literature as well as provided illuminating interpretations of our classical heritage besides breaking new ground in the field of poetics. It has produced the first comprehensive history of Kannada literature. Rajarathnam and Hoysala are only two among the considerable number of writers for children. As regards humour one can only mention here a few names like Kailasam, Sriranga, Gorur, Beechi, Rajarathnam and Ra.Si.

Navodaya gave forceful expression to the national struggle for freedom from imperialist domination. Poems like Bendre's 'Muvathamooru Koti' and 'Narabali' and Kuvempu's 'Indina Devaru' and 'Panchajanya' are veritable buglecalls to mobilise our people for the anti-colonial fight. The terrible toll taken by imperialist interests of national life and properly finds severe condemnation in poems like the one by Govinda Pai about the Bengal famine. Navodaya literature joined forces with the Mahatma's constructive programme for social justice and upliftment of the oppressed.

That Navodaya did not miss out on the problems of the poor and the deprived is evident in writings in all the genres. One has only to look at the works of Karanth, Kuvempu, Masti, Bendre, Sriranga and many others like 'Chomandudi', 'Malegalalli Madumagalu', 'Daatu', 'Sudrathapasvi', 'Harijanwara', 'Kudiyara Koosu', 'Kakankote', 'Mochi', 'Kalki', and 'Kurudu Kanchana' to demonstrate the genuine empathy of the writers with the weaker sections of society.

To say that Navodaya has inscribed a golden page in the history of Kannada literature is to do nothing more than justice. It is not without significance that all the five Jnanpeeta award winners for Kannada have been Navodaya writers. There is no doubt that Navodaya has done Kannada literature proud.

KANNADA NAVODAYA LITERATURE : A REEVALUATION

Dr. K. Keshava Sharma

The debate over Navodaya literature in Kannada has its origin in the history of colonial experience. In this sense, Kannada Navodaya literature is born of modern cultural history. One could state without facing the west that the Navodaya literature of Kannada made an attempt to reflect the varied thought processes generated by the colonial experience. It is difficult to apply the same yard stick to measure the problems faced by the Western Romantics and Kannada Navodaya writers. Being the offspring of modern history, Navodaya literature has inherited a few qualities of its parent. But the manner in which Kannada Navodaya poetry has perceived the agony of our country is quite different. In other words Kannada Navodaya literature as a whole is stamped with the uniqueness as is reflected within the cultural sphere of Kannada. Then, is it possible to state that Kannada Navodaya has a separate identity? In fact, what we call Kannada Navodaya literature is not a unique intellectual framework, but the universal transformations as seen within this framework. The search for the balancing point between word and illusion is the basis for Navodaya literature. Therefore there is a dialectical relationship between them. The important consideration here is in what cultural atmosphere the Navodaya writers sought this relationship.

The first visionary poet of modern Kannada literature, Shishunala Shariff, tries to resolve this through images of 'Girani' (the mill), 'Karunadu', and 'Maharani'. For his 'the mill' is not the mill which finds its immediate existence in the village. It is 'the mill' which appears against the background of Indian culture. In this manner, Kannada Navodaya literature attempts to unwind this single thread of transformation.

Though it is true that Kannada Navodaya literature has no separate identity, Alur Venkat Rao made sincere attempts to point out that is possible to catch the glimpses of the changing world in the looking-glass of Kannada literature. One of his books is titled 'Karnatakada Gathavaibhava' (The past glory of Karnataka) which is a sure indication that people like Alur Venkat Rao were moved by the desire to trace the past glory of Karnataka. As a synthesis of these two ideas we can say that the Kannada Navodaya text identified itself at a particular point. To put in the simple terms, though there are different readings of a text, isn't there a point of convergence somewhere? We are to arrive at a point of convergence regarding Kannada Navodaya literature as it is inevitable for all the different 'readings' in literature which are the reflection of ethnic culture to meet at some point.

Modern literature is the result of the confrontation between two cultures. One is the idealistic Indian middle class culture shaped by the modern education and the other is the dominant culture of the ruling colonialists. The modern education system which took its shape along with the dominant culture has definitely influenced the cultural foundations of Karnataka.

It is important to take note how, during its confrontation with the ruling culture and the sub-ordinate culture reveals its different facets. Isn't it true that the western education system pitched English against the languages of India? As English made its presence as the official

language, it channelised many things in India. One of the most important Navodaya poets, B.M. Sri. catches this dialeetic relationship in one of his poems of "English Geethegalu" (English Songs). "I wished to sing, making this girl to wear that girl's dress and that girl wear this girl's". These are numerous examples in Navodaya Kannada poetry which highlight the fact that English was not just the official language but the language which could influence the cultural spheres. B.M. Shri said : "Rule Britannia".

Such expressions indicate the mentality of a suppliant who has accepted the bondage. Therefore, dialogue between the culture of the ruling class and the ruled has given way to different models in Navodaya Kannada literature.

Kannada Navodaya literature ideologically endorses certain aspects granted by the governing colonialists. It does not mean that such endorsement can be perceived at all the levels of Navodaya literature. This is one possible reading of Navodaya poetry. The ideological endorsement is again the direct result of the then education system. There are two principal interests in endorsing the ideas granted by the ruling class: Firstly, the conception that the reconciliation with the governing body may herald social changes. Concept like these have taken into consideration several modern ideas. For example we can behold the attempt to manage through modern conceptions, ideas like remarriage of widows and child marriage. As these concepts were made use of by the Navodaya poets as the harbingers of cultural development, their poetry naturally has a direct appeal. The first novels of Kannada like "Indira Bai', 'Bhagirathi" display the desire for "social changes'. The desire for transformation has peeped into the model of reconciliation. This desire has been transformed into a social aspect in Navodaya literature.

Isn't it true that we study literature as a regional phenomenon became of the possibility of definite meaning in the context of literary dialogue in the milieu of social re-construction? Navodaya literature

has confronted this aspect also. The then education system also encouraged the study of literature as a discipline of definite perception. The "Gurukulas" of pre-colonial period were meant exclusively for the education of the upper-caste people. Sanskrit was the main subject of study in these "Gurukulas". The entry of "English Culture" changed the whole scene. Whatever may be the Governing Body's interpretation of this, it is true that due to this cultural shift it was possible for the study of literature to complement the regional phenomenon. Shifts like these are to be sought in particular cultural environment. It is remarkable how the culture of Karnataka (erstwhile Old Mysore region) opened itself up during the confrontation of two diverse cultures. Naturally new models of literary culture came into being when the learning process became more dependant on written tradition. Though the education system of the British colonialists had a definite aim, it took a different shape in Kannada cultural milieu. Gulwadi Venkat Rao's "Indira Bai", Kuvempu's "Malegalalli Madumagalu" uphold a different interpretation of the English education system.

These are a few different facts representative of the educational culture prevalant before the unification of Karnataka. For example the cultural atmosphere of Mangalore (South Canara District) was tied up with modern region; Mangalore was also the centre which threw open its gates for Christian missionaries. Because of its relationship with the Madras region it comes under a particular sphere of influence. The regional culture of Mysore has a different sphere of influence from that of Mangalore. But we cannot categorise the cultural atmosphere of Dharwad in the same sphere of influence. In the same manner the cultural atmosphere of Belgaum had different influences. The cultural issues raised by people like Gulwadi Venkat Rao, with the background of Mangalore culture, try to depict the historical change with particular views. As said in Gulwadi Venkat Rao's "Indira Bai", an Indian crossing over the sea for English education becomes an out caste in the traditional society. In fact he becomes a pariah.

In Kuvempu's novels the process of modern learning is an indication of the arrival of idealistic values. Hoovaiah, the protogonist of one of the novels of Kuvempu with his modern education stands apart from his regional culture. The novel "Nisarga" infused densely with the cultural atmosphere of Belgaum, does not portray such conflicting perceptions of modern education. In this regard, the important aspect to be taken note of is how the Navodaya writers of Kannada tried to capture the changing cultural perspective in a totally different manner. All these basic problems are dealt with in Kannada novels. The existence of the old religious institutions was challenged when the literature of Kannada was born in its institutional form. After the establishment of the universities of Madras and Mysore as the major learning centres, the study of literature acquired greater meanings. Along with the changing nature of the education system, certain important questions about the literary models were raised. In keeping with the changes in the inner world of culture the thinking about literary forms also acquires new dimensions. For example the literary forms like "Bhavageethe" (the lyric) and "Novel" born in Kannada are the literary manifestations of the experience gained. The Kannada novel thus displays the possibility of a different kind of communication. Though, in a general genre, a novel is "the epic of the middle class" in the context of the culture of Karnataka the definition of the novel needs to be modified. The confonrtation among culture, history and the educated middle class is the main force "behind the origin of the novel". All the pioneering Kannada novelists were familiar with English literature. Gulwadi Venkat Rao, the author of the first social novel in Kannada, 'Indira Bai' (1899) and Bolar Babu Rao, the author of "Vagdevi" (1905), were the Saraswat's who defied the religious heads with their sarcasm. The Konkanis (Saraswath's) were the settlers from Gomantak region who sought the patronage of Keladi Dynasty. They were given important official posts in the rural Government. During the time of Hyder and Tippu they lost their previleged positions. But during the British Raj, they were restored to their previous important positions, which enabled them to acquire the modern education. They very soon got into government departments by virtue of their education.

The lyric form in Kannada came into being due to the same sort of reconcilation with the colonial Government. Through imitation a new literary form takes its birth. But in fact the relationship between the new literary form and imitation is not a simple one. Prabhushankar, a Kannada critic with traditional outlook, traces the origin of the Kannada lyric to the Upanishads. This view point upholds native tradition. One cannot rule out the political, cultural aspects of imitation. the Navodaya poets, in the beginning, followed the model set up by the English Romantics but later on the Kannada lyric form acquired its own uniqueness. The English Romantics and the Kannada lyricists were moved by the totally different feelings. Though certain parallels can be seen one cannot relate Kannada lyric to Romantic poetry. In the beginning imitation was an essential factor because lyric form was not a part of Kannada literature. A few minor factors responsible for imitating the English lyric form can be cited here.

The desire to explore new frontiers of knowledge blotted out the difference between 'we' and 'them'. Enthusiasm born of the possibility of a new mode of expression made it possible for intellectual interaction. The model of lyric flowed down the English channel but the essence remained that of the native land. B.M. Shri's translation of English lyrics and translation of Wordsworth's poetry are examples of ideal coexistance of two cultural activities.

The term like, "Progress", "Development", "Science" repeatedly used in Navodaya literature seem to challenge the traditional society. "Both religion and science co-exist in Navodaya poetry, because the Navodaya poets thought that such co-existance is essential for the progress of mankind. Therefore Navodaya poetry has never expressed reactionary tendencies. Navodaya poetry felt that religion is essential for the development of an individual's personality and that science is a pre-requisite for the progress of civilisation. Therefore Navodaya literature has treated science with great respect and upholds the situation wherein science and religion co-exist, argues D.R. Nagaraj (1927-82) and he further says.

"This lyrical synthesis between science and religion provided sustenance for many pro-people viewpoints. While this synthesis paved way for such attitudes in Navodaya literary thought, it appeared in a distintive manner in creative process. Synthesis manifested itself in conceiving the world, grasping experience and turning it into art. Spiritual terminology was expressed in scientific metaphors. At times scientific concepts became marvellous creative images. Kuvempu's poem 'Rasaleela' is a good example for this. This is how it is expressed in Kuvempu's poem;

From atom to galaxies
From blade of grass to the Himalayas
The amorous sport, everywhere.
Law of Nature? Electricity?
Many names, many forms
But finally, everywhere,
Amorous sport everywhere.

Kuvempu, one of the prominent Kannada poets, makes use of the terms like "Cosmic Humanism" and "Univeral Consciousness". He feels that any point in the Malnad should open itself up to the Universal happenings. The intellectual atmosphere shaped by history has left its deep mark on Kuvempu. Anxiety and enthusiasm felt at the birth of a new era is more evident in Kuvempu's works. Intentness about modern era and the attitude towars changing traditional values go together in his works. Kuvempu's novels take place against the background of Malnad region. But the heroes, Hoovaiah and Mukundaiah, face tup to the outer world. Kuvempu's Universality rejects the marshes of regional culture.

There are many intricaries involved in the process of a second rate Indian citizen thinking about universal matters. Terms like "Cosmic Humanism" fall into the periphery of the colonialist. When the subjugated native talks in those terms he is concerned with the

progress of the native land. Similar terms are used by both the ruler and the ruled but in a different sense. Here lies Kuvempu's regionalism voicing universal thought-process, "Moral values" were perceived in the light of "individual development' by the Navodaya poets. The concept of individual dignity is the result of the them education system.

There was a deeply felt respect for history among Navodaya writers which contirubuted to literature in two ways. Firstly the respect for history worked as a creative process. Historical novels in Kannada are the expressions of this creative process. Masti's "Chikkaveera Rajendra" depict the life of Kodagu's king. The novel is also a statement on the evils of kinghood. Masti does not look upon history as "history" but infuses it with his creative imagination. Secondly, the respect for history found expression in the literary history of nature. The very first discipline to be introduced by the colonial rule historic outlook is history. Against this background Navodaya writers have viewed history thus : when history is a written as literary history the terminology of culture and politics are incorporated into it. This is again the gift of the British. Betageri Krishna Sharma was a scholar of Navodaya period. History can be clearly perceived in his work "Karnatakada Janajeevana" (Life of the people of Karnataka). He makes use of literary works to interpret history of Karnataka. D.L. Narasimhachar, who considers the personal life of poets for reconstruction of literary history, also works with the same perspective. Therefore, history for Navodaya critics is a process of research.

During Navodaya period a few arguments were placed regarding Kannada language also. Rev. Kittel wrote a book on grammar of the Kannada langugage. This was an attempt to particularise the language. Colonialism, in its attempt to particularise language, destroys the many faceted culture, by keeping dialects out.

There is another model in Navodaya which can be termed "Rebillious model'. The term "Rebellion" includes nationalistic spirit. Not all the

models which govern intellectual world are in agreement with the Government. D.R. Nagraj says, "Nationalism expressed in Navodaya literature basically follows the spirit of Tilak. As it does not take into consideration the chasm between the individual and society it is, by nature, militant. In this context progress of an individual and society is one and the same. There are factors other than historic to term it Tilakite. Before Gandhi's advent as a national leader Tilak was the most influential leader. Gandhian politics are not as simple as Tilak's" (D.R. Nagraj 1917-82).

According to D.R. Nagraj, Kuvempu's call "to march forward" is inspired by Tilak's brand of politics. In a way nationalistic feeling is an emotion, an attitude regarding a particular landmass. The concept of "Nation" is also the result of direct contact with western culture. There are reactions at many levels to the Indian nationalistic movement. In the context of Kannada Navodaya, Nationalistic movement has inspired two models of expression. The first is to explore nationalism within the innerworld of culture. This process can be seen in the study of culture. The tendency of visualising nationalism in culture is more evident in Navodaya literature. The spirit of Nationalism made the educated man to think about his culture. Kuvempu's "Malegalalli Madumagalu" "Kanur Heggidathi", and Shivaram Karanth's "Marali Mannige" explore the cultural world within the realistic tradition. Perhaps we were not aware of realistic mode of expression before colonial experience. Therefore Kannada Navodaya novels display the tendency to historicise cultural concepts. Karanth describes the changing values in Brahmin community in "Marali Mannige" whereas Kuvempu, the gradual transformations in the lifestyle of the people of Malnad region. These novels with such exemptions are overlaid with rebellious attitude.

National movement finds direct expression also in Navodaya literature. In Gorur Ramaswamy Iyengar's "Hemavathi" Gandhi himself becomes one of the characters of the novel. This novel features

Satyagrahis also, and there is an excessive concern about the lower caste people. Mirji's "Rashtrapurusha" is also on the same lines.

Creative expression of nationalism, naturally takes the form of adoration of nature. For the poet Bendre, Nationalism means love for one's culture. He, quit criticises the ruling class.

"Fight of slaves is
sport for masters
Oh the agony of fish caught in the hook
O the agony.

Triumph of living and victorious,
Rotting half-dead lives
full of maggots
full of tears

Like a baby buried again in the womb".

This is a powerful criticism levelled against the ruling class. The wrath against the rulers turns into love for the ruled. Therefore, Navodaya poets are confronted with a new possibility which was not available for the English Romantics. The metaphors used by the Navodaya poets are also full of the tussle between the ruler and the ruled. In Bendre's "Look, the Bird is Flying", a bird goes round and round in the sky only to peck at head of the state and finally flies over the heads of Kings. Thus Bendre makes new metaphor of a bird.

Rebellious tone underscores the universal desire for social harmony. Pu.Thi. Na, Bendre and Kuvempu write about love with great concern because without internal unity and harmony nationalistic feelings do not survive. Love between man and woman, love for nature, love for humanity, pride for culture; in this manner love is interwoven in Navodaya poetry.

Poets like Madhura Chenna have made use of the concept of love for spiritual exploration. In tthis regard, says H. S. Shivaprakash,' "Love for humanity, love for nature found in his poetry are the means to reach God. In his poems there is neither sweet not butter relationships. There are just relationships. After success forming into poetry the different levels of the sou;'s journey, there was not enough food left for his poetry. Therefore Madura Chenna differs from the mainstream of Kannada visionary poets. Before and after reaching the state of enlightenment, saints undertook the task of upliftment of both the soul and society. This tradition in our culture was continued by Mahatma Gandhi. But Madhura Chenna's inspiration was Maharshi Arobindo not Mahatma Gandhi. In one of his letters, Arobindo describes the love of society and nation as "egoism magnified". Visionary poets like Shishunal Shariff and Madhura Chenna established themselves in the wake of the regional reaction to modernity. Through religious sensibility, they confronted the colonial rule. Religious faith is the main concern of these poets. While preaching determination of spirit, these poets searched the inner soul of our culture. This expression of inner courage is the ultimate representative process of Navodaya poetry. Shishunal Shariff, sarcastically looks at the modern development while saying "Look, look at the huge windmill". Visionay poets oppose the entry of modernity whereas Navodaya novelist have reacted in a different way. Intellectual activities were governed by modernity borne along with the colonial experience. This was responsible for overthrowing the traditional society. Local culture reacted to it at different levels. As has been argued at the beginning of the article, scientific outlook was an important factor responsible for bringing about positive changes in Kannada literature. But the changes brought in by science and techonolgy were watched with trepidation by the Kannada writers. There cannot be any dobut that modern English education was mainly responsible for bringing new political consciousness. The dilemma of whether one must accept new educa-

tion system or not is expressed in Karanth's "Marali Mannige". The following extract is a piece of conversation between the Brahmin Ital and a priest.

"What about govt. schools? Don't they declare holiday for Vijayadashami?"

"Government does't care for such things. There is a school in Karkala. Children can attend the school on whatever day they wish. Even on Ekadashi and Amavase the school is open". "Are you planning to send your child to that school where children of different castes are made to sit together"?

"Really? Is it possible? If my child goes there, there won't be any difference between him and a low-born boy". "That is the attitude of the Government. I won't allow any creature other than brahmin into my school. Nagappa Shetty requests me to teach his son Yakshagana. But I said 'No'".

"If the same situation continues for two more years we Brahmins may have to till our own lands". (Page - 138).

In the passage quoted above the Brahmin community was worried about the non-availability of low-caste people for tilling their lands. Brahmin community was also worried about maintaining the purity of Brahminism. The same concern is expressed in Masti's "Kakana Kote".

In spite of all this, Kannada Ballad singers sang about the destruction of National culture by industry. A ballad entitled "Bharath Bodhe" speaks of tragic end of Indian culture. Another ballad talks about the foreign railway system gobbling up money of the poor native cart drivers. The same ballad derides post card and telegraph as symbols of colonial oppression.

Kannada Navodaya novels have dealt with the influence of mission-

aries on tribal culture. Karanth's "Chomana Dudi", and Kuvempu's "Malegallalli Madumagalu" discuss the influence of the Christian missionaries, and these novels covertly criticise such influences.

We perceive the desire to return to culture in Kannada Navodaya writers. Nationalism is also seen in the context of individual beliefs, search for old governing models and concepts of rural development. Pu.Thi. Na with his nationalistic outlook, looks at ancient myths in a different way. Krishna, for him, is an embodiment of unlimited vigour.

In spite of all this, Navodaya literature had to face certain problems. It has depicted raw experiences of the middle class. It has tried to universalise its ordinary cultural problems. Navodaya literature seems to be obsessed with old fendal society. There is also the problem of choosing between crossing over the historic barriers or to succumb to it. The dilemma has constantly haunted the Navodaya writer. As an anodyne for the pain of crossing over the barriers of history, Navodaya literature has resortent to concepts like "Lyric", "Old myth". Feudal society" "Folk structure" etc. Navodaya literature establishes relationship with the imaginary world in many ways.

When personal dreams enter the market world through book culture, various nagging and ambivalent problems crop up. Hence, in Navodaya literature, rejection and acceptance entered into a multi-facetal textual dialectics. The way it has imaged Kannada appears to suggest the crises of Indian society struggling through 18th and 19th centuries.

Tr. by S. Umesh Chandra

POETRY

BENDRE

She was a child yet; and he, a boy
Their parents' mirth no bounds knew
To wed them in Credo's name
And rejoice in festivity.

A wedding locket she wore round her neck
And a nose-ring to match the yellowed cheek
Full with the red dot, it was an eyeful to watch
When the Kid-wife pranced about.
She was just pubescent; and he, an adolescent
Yet they shared a nuptial bed
The groom looked silly, but the town played out
Its own game of festivity.

Exciting was the first-born before a year lapsed
But when the baby breathed in, the new dad breathed his last
God's wanton play, may be, the whole town said
To sour up the milky ocean.
The baby too went on his father's trail
In a day or two, what then was left for her?
A mere being entombed in her body
Just like a honey-bee bereft of her honey.
'Alas!' the young mother yelled

'I am as good as dead', she bemoaned
And howling about in hysteric craze
She whimpered, she clattered and cursed herself-
O how quick she lost her damned wifehood
To become a widow-celebrity?
She belonged to scribes and the town was righteous
Why fuss then, if it is so ordained?

The hair was clipped and ash smeared;
A red saree was wound around
Alas! she was but a child
Should she not make up? No, it is otherwise now.

Was she then born to eat this lowly gruel
and to twitch the lamp-wicks throughout?
She wreathed all flowers on a prickly bush
And so led her life to eternity!

When the young widow to temple came
With a lace of sighs and tear beads
The idol flinched and the sermon stopped
For the priest had a lump in his throat.

A fitting memorial to a blind creed,
She stood there beside herself; the owlet sang.
The sealing eye looked face to face
Charming the story of the philandering Lord!

(Tr. Deshakulakarni)

Jogi

Beyond the road-crossing where the rainlet
goes underground and stray cattle stealthily graze,
where peopple lose their way and get aufully confused,
a pair of owls hoof there, mistaking the day for the night.

If you go beyond the crossing and the cemetary and turn left
you see a pond covered with weeds, which looks
as if the god of love has spread his green shirt.
If you part the weeds black waters beckon you to enter.

A little further you came across a hillock with caves
and a field dedicated to the dark goddess.
If you climb the tamerind which is there at the centre
you will notice a cluster of ten trees on a raised ground.

There the bats shriek alund in full daylight,
flocks of doves rush in and out continuously;
there the nectar-giving creeper has climbed a neem tree,
and the banyan oozes milk and the inknut shakes its body.

There the red wooded fig tree bears fruits from the top to bottom
as on a Jack tree,
The honey combs drip honey and our eyes yearn to see them.
In this groove somehow by chance has grown a mango tree
and beneath it is an anthill of the seven hooded serpant.

To this mango tree in spring a cuckoo has come.
It calls me for company as if it calls its mate.

It calls me again and again, it calls me like a siren,
giving no interval it keeps on calling as if it is not tired.

Some unknown fragrance attract the bees and makes them mad
and they have been flying confused about their way.
'Spring has come, Yes, the spring has come, it will come again'
sings the cuckoo and keeps on singing Kuhoo-kuhoo.

O Yogi, the cuckoo sings at the highest pitch,
what colour has it? what kind of eyes? Shall I go and see it?
Swaying to its rhythm, the groove has flowered
All the flowers will turn into raw fruits and all of them into fruits.

Since early morning forgetting its worries it has gone on cooing
In the bright Sun over the mango its spend, the whole summer.
O yogi, it sings as if it is playing a flute,
I can't concentrate anymore, shall I go and see it?

You have O Yogi, Come sir, You have chosen the right moment
When I was repeating the name you had told me, came this
spring to me.
Someshere in corner of the brain started the voice of the spring,
and then it has kept on spreading to every part of my being.

When I start to go to the temple it coos, and coos and coos,
When I am meditating in between it coos and coos.
Hearing it in my dream I am confused whether I am
becoming the mango tree, perhaps you have purposely chosen
this moment.

Which voice is it? Which is this cuckoo? Which is this tree?
Why is it cooing without a stop? Is the cuckoo sick?
All the hills around have crumbled by responding to the cuckoo
and sunlight is sweating; it is ripe to rain.

(Tr. Sumateendra Nadig)

NOTE

Dr. Masti Venkatesha Iyengar ('Srinivasa', his pen name) (1891-1986) is one of the giants of modern Kannada literature. Masti, who did his M.A. in English literature and who served as an administrator in the Mysore Civil Service till his voluntary retirement in 1944, is a poet and playwright, a short-story writer and novelist as well as a critic and a journalist. As a poet he produced six volumes of lyrics but his more impressive contrubution is in the field of narrative poetry. In 'Navaratri' we have a work similar to 'The Canterbury Tales' and in 'Sri Rama Pattabhisheka', an epic in the classical style.

'Madalingana Kanive' is a self-contained extract from 'Sthalagala Hesarugalau' (Names of Places) published in the collection 'Aruna' (1924), which tells legends attached to certain places. It illustrates his amazing skill as a narrator, his true instinct for drama, his profound tragic sense and the mastery he displays over the medium of blank verse all the more remarkable considering he was almost certainly the first to experiment with and employ it in Kannada poetry in this very poem. Like Wordsworth's 'Michael' the poem breathes "the still sad music of humanity".

Masti won the Sahitya Akademi award for his 'Short Stories' (11 & 12) in 1968 and the Jnana Pitha award for 'Chickavira Rajendra' in 1983.

MADALINGA'S KANIVE

The road from Chicknayakanahalli
To Tumkur lies in a valley known

As Madalinga's Valley, thereby hangs
A tale which touches the heart. Years ago
In a village hereabouts there lived two sisters
Both fair, their mother's nephew, Madalinga
- I do not know if that was his actual name
Or whether it was a corruption of a word
Meaning a bridegroom, 'Maduvaniga' -
Married the elder one. After a while
He went to the village to take his bride home.

On an auspicious day he left with her.
Her mother and her sister accompanied her, too,
As usual. A sturdy figure of a man
Was Madalinga, broad-chested, his face
Large and full, his eyes bright and shining
And an engaging smile flashing beneath
His tender moustaches. The mother and the girls
Had known him from his early years.
They walked jesting and teasing. The sister
Asked the bride 'how could you find it
In your heart to leave us? 'The bride's eyes streamed
with tears. A wife has perforce to go
With her husband. Yet it is hard to part
From a sister, the life of one's life so far.
'Won't you be going, too', the mother queried
To your husband's home in your turn?
The girl knit her brows and tossed her head
And said. 'A husband I don't need'!
Amused, Madalinga smiled and remarked,
'Don't I know these games girls play? "No,no"
They cry but at the right man's call, to him
They run! 'Rejoined the girl, 'What cheek!
It's but three days since he married and he knows
All things'.
It was noon. Bright light filled all

The quarters of the sky, A pleasant day.
They chewed pan. The young man was fond
Of teasing and the girl equally so.
Which young man, when a girl posed
A challenge, a girl in youthful bloom,
Would hesitate to take it up?
Madalinga asked, smiling,'How will you know
If I know or don't? If you don't like
To live apart from your sister
Why don't you also come, and learn'?
The girl blushing and bowing her head
Glanced at her mother. No further words
Passed as they walked on for half
A furlong. Then the wife appealed
To her mother,' Do send my sister with me.
He will not object. I can't live
withour her. Can't he who has accepted me
Accept her, too, and take good care
Of us both?' At this, Madalinga felt
Attracted to the girl. A real beauty
She was, with heavy hair, braided
And bejewelled and fragrant with jasmine blossom,
Her red, red lips, her bright nose-screw
And ear-rings and the auspicious kumkum
On her forehead. No wonder, he lost his heart
To her. He looked at the mother, even
As the girl did, in silent suspense.

How does it happen that love found its way
So swiftly to each others heart? Have you seen
Two eagles, like lords of the air, fly aloft
In the sky on wide-spread wings? Higher
And higher they soar, male and female.
Do they speak to each other? Do they

signal their desire by any sign? Now and then
They acclaim their achievement of greater heights
In long shrill screams. These you see and hear
But have you seen their mutual desire
Streak like a flash of lightning from cloud
To cloud? Very soon they cease to fly
And descending to the top of a huge tree, make love.
This is the Lord's miracle.

How can
I know or say when or how Madalinga
And his wife's sister fell in love? As their hearts
Lost to each other they anxiously waited,
The mother exclaimed, 'What words are these'?
How can any one manage two wives
Like you, both in the full bloom of youth?'
'Dear mother-in-law', pleaded Madalinga,
'Am I old? Haven't these girls been brought up
In a good tradition? Can't I take
Proper care of your other daughter
Too, if you give her in marriage? Won't
They make me good wives? Is it so uncommon
For a man to take two wives?'

By this time
They had arrived at this valley, which
Winds around a hill of considerable height
For full three miles. It would cut this distance
To a sixth to go up and down the hill.
But to do so is, however, so hard
That even the most daring do not attempt it.
The mother said, 'A girl may be brought up
In a good tradition and yet she would need
A compatible spouse for a contented life.

If you desire my younger daughter
To marry also, I would agree
Provided you climb this hill moving
Backwards and descend on the other side.
Would you do it? 'She was only teasing,
She was not serious. Madalinga,
The robust youth that he was, would love
To win the girl's hand if at all it was possible.
When a woman throws a challenge which young man
Would fail to accept it? 'Agreed', he said,
I will accomplish the task you have set me
and you will let me marry this girl.
But when I get down on the other side
Exhausted, let her be there with this pail.
To pour down water for me to drink
Into my cupped hands. Then with a glance
At the girl's fair face he started to climb
The hill, moving backwards.

The sun
Was fierece. As he kept climbing, the mother
Felt anxious and fearing lest he should
Not survive the ordeal, cried out 'Enough
Of climbing! Do come down'. But he would
Not stop. He asked again to have water
Ready for him on the other side
And kept on climbing. 'Alas!' the mother
And the daughters sighed, 'The jest has turned
Sinister'. Fast they walked and the other side
Reached. They were sweltering and their throats were parched
They had but that one pail. Nowhere
Nearby could they find even a drop of water.
The elder daughter offered to the mother
The pail, saying, 'Mother, drink a little',

The younger demurred, crying, 'Mother, don't.
When we ourselves feel so tired, how
Much more will he be! We shall drink
After him'. The mother appreciated
The girl's caution and said, 'What you say
Is true. We have only walked around
While he has laboured up and down the hill
You shall pour water into his hands
And what remains after he has drunk
We shall all share'. And so they waited
For Madalinga.

Successfully
He climbed the hill on one side and got
Down on the other, moving backwards.
Need I say that he was dead tired?
It was noon and in the middle of summer.
He had laboured up and down the hill.
His throat was parched, He could not speak
He looked at the mother, smiling a little
In the joy of his victory and turning towards
The girl with the pail made a sign for water
Cupping his hands. Tears of joy welled
In her eyes like gifts of pearls she bore
To do him honour. She bent the pail
To pour the water into his hands
But in the flurry of her joy and hurry
The pail slipped from her hands and all the water
Was spilled. Madalinga breathing hard
Laid himself down, tormented by thirst
And in great anguish gazing at the girl.
'Alas!' cried the mother, sitting by his side
And fanning him with the end of her sari.
The elder daughter, Madaling's bride,

Felt furious with both her mother and her sister
Accusing the latter, 'You could not bear
To see me happy and spilt the water
With intent to kill him'. Her sister said
Not a word but ran with the empty pail
To the nearest village seeking to fetch
Water. But before she could return
Madalinga breathed his last.

So was scorched
A promising crop of the cornfield
While still ripening. And the valley came
To be known as Madalinga's valley.
The rocks that witnessed the tragic event
Of that day in sympathetic grief
Seem even now to mourn his death.
It is rumoured that Madalinga still
Haunts this valley roaming about
Seeking water to slake his thirst
And some of the people who walk hereabouts
Think they see him in their fear and are scared.

Masti Venkatesha Iyengar
(Translated by K. Narasimha Murthy).

KALKI

Kuvempu

In sleep's own world, along the path of a dream
Trudging and toiling, I lost my way,
Ahead of me I found a forest
Endless in expanse and thick with trees
Of mammoth size with diverse creepers
Intricately intertwined.
Shrubs with sharp thorn, shrubs with saw-like edges
Spectral-looking cactus bushes.
Into that dream's vast wilderness
I plunged. No light of any kind was there
That could be called light. Nor was it dark either.
Whether light or dark God alone could say.
Terror stalked the woods like ghastly shades
Creeping hither and thither. In those perilous woods
I walked on and on not losing heart
And with adventurous and unflugging spirit,
Silence all around, silence like that of the dead .

I got through the forest. Ahead of me stood
A mountain, its summit touching the sky
I climbed and climbed till at length I gained
The very top of its head. There I saw a city,
A city of what kind? A city illusory!
On one side stood opulent mansions.
On the other, destitute cottages

On one side shone lustrous gem-set lamps
On the other, it was dark, dark, totally dark
There, music's melodious strains
Here, grief's long-drawn-out lament
There, arrogantly, they chuck surplus food
These , here, in the cruel pangs of hunger, pine
There a garden, here a burial ground
There they flaunt silks in fantastic colours
Here not even rags to cover one's loins.

As I looked and kept looking, I was startled.
Hunger-fires from poor men's stomachs
Leapt and lapped up first their own cottages
Then soared to the skies and spread to the four quarter
And enveloped affluent men, licking them
With tongue-like flames. Ah! What an awesome fiend
Can poor men's anger be! Unmatched
Even by fire blazing at the bottom of the sea.
Caught in the hunger - fires of the poor
Affluent mansions toppled charred.
I, too, watching from the mountain top,
Felt the flames scald. At once were heard
Anguished cries and agonized screams
Of little children. Pregnant women,
Women lying in, young women, newly wed,
Women living on the lap of luxury,
Young men, old men, the lame, the deaf,
Those others deaf to poor men's groans,
And those who for a living don saffron robes
And feed on the ignorance of the famished poor
Feathering their own nests, and those who savour.
Sumptuous dinners, preceptors, disciples.
Homes, monasteries, all, all consumed
In the hunger-fires of poor men's stomachs

In the vadava fire of the bottom of the sea
The hunger - fires of the poor are the true vadava fire
And it is the poor who are Kalki, the final incarnation,
Awaited at the end of the Kali age.*

As I kept looking, that scene vanished,
Yielding place to, Oh! What a frightful scene!
Cascades of blood! Stench of human flesh,
Cascades of blood, plunging down,
Pathetic groans from human throats,
The sky all blood, the earth all blood,
Blood, blood, oh blood!, wherever you look,
Mangled bodies, severed heads and trunks
Rolling down the cascading river of blood
Like hailstones in a heavy monsoon downpour
Like boulders trundling down with a terrific din
Heads of lovely women, men of piety and merit
Temple towers and abodes of righteousness
Drifting like sweepings on the bloody flood.

Who is it from afar ruthlessly rushing
Hither? A spectre, he seems, with pallid jaws
Gleaming, a skeletal steed his mount.
In his righ hand a sword he wields like lightning
And in his left a hamper of thunderbolts.
A skeleton horse, a skeletal cavalier
Surely it is Kalki, the saviour of the poor?
The embodiment of the distress of the destitute?
As I stood witness, looking, listening,
'I'm hungry', 'I'm thirsty,' he clamoured,
'Blood, blood, blood, O blood!' he demanded,
Horse and all, into the steam of blood he plunged
And with his cupped hands scooped the blood and drank
And gathered armfuls of heads and devoured them
The horse's fierce neighing and the horseman's guffa's of laughter

Like a concatenation of claps of thunder
Bombarded all the quarters of the universe
The horse and the horseman both kept on drinking
Till they drained to the last drop the stream of blood,
Their thirst yet unquenched. All the dead they devoured.
Their hunger remained yet unappeased.
The thirst of poor men's burning throats
The hunger of poor men's flaming bellies

All of a sudden, lo! standing on the mountain top
I caught his eye and he came after me
Totally lost and shaking all over
I saw him closing in on me and screaming,
'Kalki.! Kalki!' .... I awoke.

After such a dream, can you sleep again?

— 'Kuvempu'

Tr. by K. Narasimha Murthy.

WAKE UP O SLEEPING MOTHER EARTH

Madhurachanna

Enough of breast milk, mother,
Sing me a sweet lullaby.mother,
Kiss, feel and fondle me.
Wake up
O sleeping Mother earth,

No more hunger, no more joy
No, not your breast, give me a kiss
Wake up
O sleeping Mother earth.

Suckled for hunger, I am now in sorrow
Don't give me milk, embrace me
Wake up
O sleeping Mother earth.

Having tasted breastmilk, I long
For heart's milk,
Blinking for each draught,
Wake up
O sleeping Mother earth,

The nectar of flowers, sweetness of fruits;
Is your milk, How much sweeter, your heart?
Wake up
O sleeping Mother earth.

Lovely like the moon, mighty like Indra
Is your body. How much lovelier, your heart,
Wake up,
O sleeping Mother earth,

Darkness caving in the baby's closed eyes,
then. Not then, now I see
Wake up,
O sleeping Mother earth,

Where does the stream of breast milk spring?
Is it the same now as then?
Wake up,
O sleeping Mother earth,

"Mother", I said casually then. But now
I have seen with eyes and heart
Wake up,
O sleeping Mother earth,

Yes, I drank it. True, I saw.
What use now are drinking and seeing?
Wake up,
O sleeping Mother earth

Then the feel of darkness; now the spell of soft sun-light;
What is dark? What, white?
Wake up
O sleeping Mother earth,

Unseeing blindness, then, seeing blindness, now;
Does it matter whether I see or not
Wake up,
O sleeping Mother earth,

Neither Knowing nor unknowing; but unsteadily knowing
Waht is knowing with unfulfilled desires?
Wake up
O sleeping Mother earth

Not the pity here or the guilt there;
Why this being without being?
Wake up
O sleeping Mother earth,

A dead log burst into shoots
But gave no flowers or fruit
Wake up
O sleeping Mother earth.

Whenever the sleep dark and death-like?
What use is being or not being?
Wake up
O sleeping Mother earth

Touch does not make you stir
Tears do not make you whimper
Your lips have not shaken a bit
Wake up
O sleeping Mother earth.

Your words come true and memories stick fast
Pull the veil off your face
Wake up
O sleeping Mother earth,

Give up this milky, honeyed sleep
Give up sleep sweet like sugar,
Wake up
O sleeping Mother earth,

O damsel of dreams, O phantom of hearts,
Wake up and open the eyelids
Wake up
O sleeping Mother earth

Wake up O Mother ! Wake up, my mother
My heart is not pleased unless you do.
Wake up
O sleeping Mother earth.

Your breath, this wind. Your warmth, this heart
Make buds burst into blossoms
Wake up
O sleeping Mother earth.

Enough of breast-milk, O mother
Sing me a sweett lullaby, O mother,
Kiss, feel and fondle me.
Wake up
O sleeping Mother earth.

Tr. H. S. Shiva Prakash

SRI HARICHARITA

P. T. Narasimhachar

Purohita Thirunarayana Iyengar Narasimhachar was born in the famous temple town of Melkote on 17th March 1905, the very day the vairamudi of the deity there was being celebrated. No wonder he was later to compose his long meditative poem of over fifty ten-lined stanzas titled 'Male Degula' 'Temple atop the Hill'(1954) and to complete his epic of thirty three cantos of 'Sri Haricharita' (1988) about the birth and early revels of Krishna in Gokula as well as his lyrical play 'Gokula Nirgamana' (1955) depicting Krishna's departure from Gokula.

After his graduation in Mysore he held several posts including editing and translation work in connection with the compilation of the Kannada Encyclopaedia and the English - Kannada Dictionary. He has produced a fine translation of Goethe's Fraust'

One of the Illustrious trio of Navodaya poets along with 'Kuvempu' and Bendre, Narasimhachar is at once a poet and a playwright of great distinction as well as a noted essayist, and short story writer. His first collection 'Hanathe' (1933) is remarkable for its Wordsworthian portraits of simple people, the depth of whose feelings invests them with noble dignity. He is Wordsworthian again both in the subtlety of his intruitive perception and penetrative analysis of the deepest feelings of the human heart and in the simplicity of his language. Several volumes have followed in an active poetical career and his Collected Poems appeared in 1985. Though in his later poems one

misses at times the early simplicity of language, one recognizes that the growing complexity of his perceptions has its own irresistible demands.

He is the foremost writer of lyrical drama in the language, what with his 'Ahalya', 'Gokula Nirgamana' and 'Satya Harishchandra'. Among his other works mention may be made of his essays collected in 'Eechala Marada Kelage', his short stories in 'Dhwaja Rakshane' and his penetrative reflections on the nature of poetry and poetic creation in 'Kavya Kutuhala'.

Narasimhachar's crowning achievement as a poet is his epic, 'Sri Haricharita', the exordium of which is here below presented in translation. The epic presents the birth of Krishna and the services he renders even as a boy in a typical Indian village on the banks of the Jamuna, in a way that brings out at one and the same time their cosmic significance as well as their present relevance. The exordium itself probes deeply into the traditional belief in incarnation, facing squarely the challenge of modern scientific approaches. The Kalinga Mardana and Govardhanoddharana episodes bring out Krishna's efforts to promote the prosperity of the rural areas while the Radha episode fascinates with its evocation of a world of sublime love and devotion.

Narasimhachar is not just a profoundly religious poet. He is a marvellous poet of nature and of love. What distinguishes him along with his deeply spiritual feeling and his stress on ancient cultural values in his modern sensibility, his mythic consciousness, his striking imagery. The great value of his poetry lies in his building bridges between mythic consciousness on the one hand and our consciousness of the panorama of today's existence on the other and availing himself of the one to find order and meaning in the other.

Narasimhachar won the Central Sahitya Academic award for 'Hamsa

Damayanti' in 1965. The State Sahitya Academy has honoured him with its Prasasti in 1966.

K. Narasimha Murthy.

Salutation

Far, farther than far, no doubt, He is,
The Supreme one, like the sky overhead,
Or the sun or the stars or the indifferent
Multitude and yet He is close, quite close,
Like the sky, again, embracing the hills,
Or the sliver of the moon shining over
The spreading tree's thickly matted hair
Or the sun sporting with the clouds or the star
Crowning the temple tower. Close He is,
Quite close, lover-like, like a father, like a friend,
Loyal and like my future listeners,
Deeply responsive to these cadences,
Close He is, our dark resplendent Lord,
The bestower benign of immediate joys
As of bliss everlasting, As with their beams that left
Ages and ages ago and illumined
Human epoch after human epoch,
The stars appear now on our nights to rise,
The Blessed Lord breaks over the horizon
Of our hearts, the illusion creating
That the ancient past were the living present
And yesterday, today.

So move I now
Pursuing my poetic pilgrimage
With my verse's varying harmonies
Following the footfalls of the divine cowherd

From the confining walls of Mathura's prison
Through the woods and pastures on the Jamuna's banks
To Dwaraka, enclasped by the ocean,
And to the crowded cities and the fearful forests
And Kurukshetra's ringing battlefields
Of the tumultuous Mahabharata war.

No wonder the Lord who charmed the cowherdesses
And lures the universe, the Lord
Lures my heart, too, which is ever so light,
Lighter than grass, which even a whiff of breeze
Is enough to stir, a mere murmur of leaves
A creeper breaking into blossom a little bird's carol,
Or mist on the green. The Lord, unknowable,
Dark like rain-bearing clouds, comes to me
He whose will is supreme moves to my will
In loving rapport, accepts my gifts.
Acts as if he is mine. I cannot bring myself
To consider him as a man, to reduce him
To human dimensions. On the other hand
To conceive him as divine goes against the grain
Of modern consciousness with its obsession with reason.
Which will not stomach miraculous feats,
Whatever seems not logical, effect following cause,
Is easily dismissed as a grandmother's tale,
Science's demands must needs be met
Presently by the muse for her wish - fulfilling tree
To bear its delectable fruit. Our senses,
No longer dwarf, seek like Thrivikram,
To overrun the realms of matter, mind
And heart and like Bali underground,
The Lord's devoted modern bard
Has to have a guard which in this case would be science,
To which necessarily he does make his obeisance,

So as my mind revels in the ensemble of melodies
Of the sublime Krishna symphony, as expressed,
The transcendent manifesting itself
Within the confines of this worldly existence
In part vision scanned a paragon among men.
But in vision full of heightened consciousness
Revealed as that Gracious Spirit that bears
And rears the whole of creation, the Infinite
Adapting itself - O the wonder of it!
To the finite, the Spirit's stilled sea of bliss
By earth's sighs stirred, a wave spilling over
In incarnation, the human face divine,
Krishan Vasudeva, of whom I sing.

P. T. Narasimhachar

(Tr. By K. Narasimha Murthy)

Dr. V.K. Gokak

Dr. Vinayaka Krishna Gokak (1909-199) is an outstanding poet, novelist, critic and educationist. He served in his time as Professor of English, Vice Chancellor and Director of the Institute of Advanced Studies, Simla. He travelled all over the globe several times and his impressions of various countries he visited have been enshrined in memorable poems and prose. He was awarded Padmashri in 1961. He served as President of the Sahitya Academy during the years 1983-88. He received the Jnanapit Award in 1992 mainly for his epic, 'Bharata Sindhu Rashmi'.

Though he started publishing poems in the early 30's he shot into fame with his 'Samudra Geethagalu' in 1956. His 'Dyava Prithvi' (1957) won him the central Sahitya Academy award (1960). What started as a brilliant single novel 'Ijjodu' in 1934 grew into a novel of epic proportious, the massive 'Samarasave Jeevana' (1967). Dr. Gokak has been a pathbreaking critic, especially with his 'Navyathe Hagu Kavya Jeevana' (1955) and he heralded the Navya movement with his 'Navya Kavithegalu'.

His 'The Poet at the Zoo Museum at Harvard' is an impressive poem published in his prose - cum - poetic work', Indilla Nale' (1965) which relates his experiences during his sojourn in the USA as the head of an educational delegation. The poem is one of the few Dantesque poems in modern Kannada. For an occasional effusion, it has an astonishingly complex structure with its two-tiered evocation of a

museum above and a museum below viewed by the mynah which plays Time's and Virgil's and Beatrice's roles to the poet's Dante below. While the one in the museum below is what man has made of non-human life on earth, that in the museum above is what man has made of man. While the threat is one of beasts seeking vendetta against man below, it is the writing on the wall, the menace of the apoclypse voiced in the heavens above that stares man in the face. The message of the mynah is something that recalls Yeats in 'The Second Coming' and other such poems of his expressive of his final foreboding. The vividness of language and imagery and the drama enacted through them match the sublimity of the vision. At the same time, how topical the poem sounds, particularly with the description of the politicians 'starting fires all over the land'! Minatory is even the title of the work which includes this poem, 'Indilla Nale'. Man should heed the writing on the wall in his own ultimate interests.

K. Narasimha Murthy.

AT THE ZOO-MUSEUM AT HARVARD

V. K. Gokak

How wonderful to Visit a Zoo-Museum,
I thought and made my way to one,
The most specatacular under the sun
Where, upon my entrance, I felt, however, dazed,
Greeted as I was by a hundred voices
Taunting, 'Here you are; Do come in, Jokumar!
What fun for you in these glass cages
To confine us; You put us the birds and the beasts,
The rightful citizens of the republic of the woods,
To torture and worse, slaughtering us at a stroke
Or consigning us to lifelong captivity.
Even the denizens of the deep you do
Not spare, robbing them of their cherished liberty,
Or the birds that freely roam the sky
Ensnaring them. We all end up
Showpieces in glass. Why hesitate?
Step in and let us get a good look at you,
You who are here to have a look at us ;'

Chilled to the bone and my heart in my mouth,
The better course would surely be, I thought,
To beat from this battlefield a quick retreat.
But lo! I had hardly moved when with a roar
The lion leapt. The seven-foot tiger
Crashed like a thunderbolt, The boar tore open
My legs' warm flesh. The leopard thrust its nose.

The wolf in ambush stalked. The polar bear
Swung me around. The elephant
Grabbed me with its tusk and flung me over.
The jackal yelped, 'Don't let us miss this chance;'
The rhino's lone horn stuck out of the pool
Of my heart's blood. My path the hippo
Blocked, budging not an inch. 'Poison',
The musk deer mocked, 'would be too good for you'.
The camel, the antelope and the kangaroo
The hare and the squirrel, it was only these
That overlooking the wrecking of their lives
Stretched their necks down in pity towards me
With eyes that were melting. The monkey grinned,
The ape cursed, the gorilla grabbed me
By the neck and with the chimpanzee
Set about strangling me, screaming,
'Have we got you now, child of our loins,'
What a saviour of our line you have proved to be !'

As from my torn limbs chunks of flesh fell
And blood dripped, I fled the infernal circle
Only to find myself in another,
Right in the midst of marine life.
The swordfish slashed at where it hurt most.
Peering from beneath its so secure shield
The turtle demanded, 'Speak, butcher, where's
Your hide-out?' The hundred-hued snake
Sucked at my life. The grotesque crocodile
Drove its jagged fangs deep into my shanks.
The serpent crono, eight- man-lengths long,
Swallowed me whole. Crushed within, I felt
Like a worm in the the dark. Disoriented
And distraught, I staggered out, a mere corpse.
And where I reached now, vultures swooped,
Ravens clawed, owls_licked, Parrots, five-hued,

Pigeons and peacocks, their plumage spread,
In pained voice jeered, 'Alas! Alas!
We made a lovely earth all the lovelier
How could you be so blind and grind us to the dust?
See, bereft of our beauty, how the earth lies widowed!'
So excrucating a sense of guilt
Pierced me, at this, at every pore,
That prostrate I fell, a rueful penitent,
At the gracious feet of the sovereign swan.

As I pined and prayed and my heartsbeats slowed
And my hold on life slackened by the minute,
Alighted at my side an angelic mynah
And waving, as it were, a life-reviving wand,
Uttered in my ears these soothing syllables,
Pouring ambrosial balm! 'Do not brag
That you are now Lord Indra's peer
Crowned, too, with the stars. Listen, I had
Occasion recently to visit
The new adjunct to the imposinmg museum
Set up by Indra in the city celestial
To acquaint the young gods with the various vicissitudes
Of human history. There in one
Of its thousand rooms stand exhibited
The ghostly essences of human individuals
And societies neatly categorised
To represent whatever progress man
Has made. Time, the curator showed me round
With patient comments. There I found
Under the caption 'Cruel and ruthless'
Timerlane and Tughlak Mohamed
And under 'Those who worship power'
Alexander, Caesar and Napoleon
And under 'Men demoniac' Hitler
Aurangazeb, Stalin and Nero

Bearing in their hands the sign Swastika
A string of beads, a hammer and a violin,
Men who could teach a thing ot two
To elephants in rut, snow bears, the rhino
And the crono and under 'Politicians',
Like foxes in the jungle, Chanakya
And Machiavelli, who, under cover,
Started fires all over the land, I could see
Countless wild bulls, vultures, antelopes,
Fish-eaters, butterflies and lambs
Lost in their dreams of green meadows.

"A corner of the showroom caught my eye
With the captions, 'Men of Goodwill' and 'The Seers'
With very few exhibits on view
Like Ashoka, Akbar, Aravinda and Gandhi.
And with a note that stated how rare these species
And how endangered, with the cruel and the crooked
Meeting with neither restraint nor resistance
And warned that such impotent inaction
And default would inevitably invite
The cataclysmic destruction of man.
My mind is troubled, filled with foreboding,
My heart bleeds for human kind in its plight".

I was disconcerted, Did the mynah mean
That we, men, were no better that wild beasts,
That we behaved like tigers and lions,
That we were the spitting images of vultures
Ravens and Owls, that our doomsday
Wan't distant, that refulgent beings
In the supernal world classified men
As so many animals for show?
I felt so ashamed, agitated; anguished.
I passed my hands over my limbs, my eyes

My ears. Me a wolf, a tiger, a lion,
A donkey? Anxious to understand
I made bold to ask, 'Am I cattle or
Even a hyena in your eyes? What am I ?
Pray, enlighten me on my true nature'

The mynah, a glint of mischief in its eyes.
Replied, 'You have no reason to be alarmed.
There is hardly any demoniac streak
In you, you are neither crooked nor cruel.
A lamb you were, entranced in a meadow
Or merrily like deer you frisked about
When a child, A merino now, you have matured.
At blessed moments you become a Seer
When the cuckoo's spirit descends upon you
And creation turns over, revealing the real
That lies within, occult, asleep,
How else could I have brought you if not for this reason
The mystic truth from the museum above?'

Suddenly the vision fled, with the mynah
No more an annunciatory angel
But a mere mute mildewed dead bird
In glass immured. Courteously
The attendant whispered, 'It's time'.
Hurriedly I got to my feet. I couldn't
Recall when I had sat down to rest.
Wiping my eyes I staggered out
Hoping against hope that men might realise
The true nobility of their nature and act
In time to avert the apocalypse.

V. K. Gokak
(Translated by K. Narasimha Nurthy).

WE SHALL BUILD

M. Gopalakrishna Adiga

"We shall build a new nation,
A home for pure joy. (Refrain)

Before our boiling fresh blood cools
Before the enchantment of our youth wears off
Before the heaving agitated sea
of zealous adventure, with its high water, goes dry.

The wish-yielding celestial cow
Of our heart's fondest dreams
Will surely yield us fulfilment's milk
Out milking hands are blessed by our visions
Our collective dedicated effort will not miss its aim.

All around us fortress walls and a moat,
That seem impregnable, of religious and caste differences;
The demon of convention that rules us
Pats his arms and thighs and calls us to battle.

Do we retreat, we the young warriors?
We shall in a single effort overleap the moat
And smite the fortress walls to smithereens
And strike at the demons'hearts and break their bones

Our dead shall be the steps to scale the fortress walls

Our injuries and death a new nation's cradle
Fear is foreign to our steadfast hearts
A defeatist mind and a warrior do not go together.

We shall swim through the seas of all difficulties
And confronted by profound despair's ordeal by fire,
Shall enter and emerge, brave and inviolable,
And unravelling all factions and obstructive problems
Build a wholesome integrated nation.

Today our life is but a long struggle for food
The belly the centre of human existence
In the raging fire of unjust food distribution
Melt all human feelings, love, culture and heavenly aspiration.

All available goods becoming accessible to all
Sorrows and joys being equally shared,
See, our nation comes sailing down
Social harmony's Samavedic melodic waves.

Here, in this very place and before our very eyes
On our sorrow's hoods
On our defeat's lap
Our nation blossoms, wait and watch,
Its fine fragrance, filling now our hearts,
Will soon be wafted on the world's air.

Our national flag held aloft by our warlike youth
Filled as much with fervent zeal as with anxious agitation
The sky is the limit for its flights
We will not let anything impede it

Come on, you, evil men, we throw you a challenge,
You who would disparage us, plot against us,

Hinder us, assault us. We will triumph over you
And on your graves, we shall build
A new nation, a home for happiness.

M. Gopalanakrishna Adiga

Tr. by K. Narasimha Murthy.

SONG OF THE BANGLE SELLER

K.S. Narasimha Swami

May I come in Sir?
It's me, chennaiah, the bangle seller.
I have come not to sell bangles
I have a few words from your naviloor home

Your wife seems happy and smiling
In her hairs young jasmine is fresh still
No worry sir, she is hale and healthy
they gave new bangles to her, the mother to be.

It was tuesday, trumpet's sound
filled the streets of naviloor
people thronged the yard of your house
they gave new bangles to her, the mother to be.

She had had festive sweets
her necklace shone brightly
with lovely grace she walked alone to her seat
I, an old man, filled her in my eyes.

She came, she came like goddess Gouri
wiping a tear or two from her eyes
she remembered you, perhaps,
and stared and stared at the quite lamp flame.

She has everything - flowers fresh, fruits sweet
saree new and ornaments of gold
but, you are not there, you are not there
she suffers and you have no pity.

She sighs, the new waiting mother
she shouldn't, my dear sir, be unhappy now.
Jasmine shouldn't wither, the fountain of life
shouldn't go dry, she suffers and you have no pity.

You are angry with your in-laws, right,
but, tell me, why should the daughter suffer?
I beg you, go there once, please,
she dreams, always, only of you.

Shanubhog's Daughter

Shanubhog's daughter, has no mother
as a jewel all the village adores her
she is clever and graceful, seetadevi her name
twelve years old, waiting yet for the groom

Motherless child, how her eyes shine
her eyes often a pond of tears
oh, when, when does love come to you
like mother to cool your heart?

One should see her as she beings,
in a shining pot, water from the tank.
One should ask her, as she plays,
with a calf in the jasmine garden, her hubby's name.

The other day, the young son of the priest
from tavarekere, came with a proposal

Song of the ...

'no' she said, sitting in her room
'food will always be late in a priests home.'

Listening, the father laughed,
the lizard on the wall screeched, the lamp went out.
What's there to say? The son of the priest
turned cool and walked out.

Early in the morning, the next day,
near the tank, she told my sister;
'that groom from honnoor,
I tell you, is darker than my hair,'

Should such an ugly man desire
the sweet little darling of our village?
Never, the festoons at the door
tell him plainly 'turn your back.'

Shanubhog's daughter, the jewel of the village
It shouldn't be difficult to get a groom suitable
let her find the best man, let the lady be happy
what if she has to wait? Let her wait.

THE MAGIC FLUTE

Gopal Krishna Adiga

What magic flute has called you
    To the distant shores?
What Brindavan has drawn these
    Earthen eyes of yours?

The flower beds, the moon, sweet sandal
                                        the kiss and embrace;
Fenced in desires' garden, senses, gyrating,
                                        dance

Loved, tender heart, the cage
    flesh-and-blood-warmed
These, you once thought, are enough.
    But why boredom this moment?

What, what is the hint of the sight
    Dazed in roving eyes?
What sweet agony is this?
    Begging for divinity?

Like heat hiding inside the tree,
    somewhere lies restlessness;

The Magic flute

Fingered or felt by something unkown
    Rage the flames of eagerness.

Somewhere beyond seven oceans
    Lies another, hot and hidden;
Still murmur of unborn waves:
    Have they arrived at this second?

Uncontrolled, your vital breath
    Ah! someone else's, your consciousness
give up what is, long for what is not -
    Is that what living is all about?

What magic flute has called you
    Now, all of a sudden?
What Brindavan has stretched out
    hands, quick like lightning?

'MARALI MANNIGE' / BACK TO THE SOIL

K. Shivarama Karanth

Aital takes a second wife

During this fortnight Aital's house was a scene of deafening commotion, a veritable cocktail, combining the effects of a choultry, a buffalo race and a village fair. The master of ceremonies at least for arranging the dinner that day was Seenamaiya. After attending to his own irrigation work much before sunrise, he had presented himself here early in the morning as promised. His wife was with him, too. He had a stentorian voice; one which as the saying goes, could blast wombs. His wife's voice matched his and even when she spoke low, she could be heard three hundred yards away. The sea's roar would be drowned when they spoke. If there were even a dozen men of this kind, an impression would be created that there were a thousand. Imagine the racket when there was a regular congregation of such persons!

Aital was himself the bridegroom but he could not take his ease. The wedding was only four days away. Who else could do the inviting of people near and dear? One could afford to despatch Seena or some one else to invite people resident at a distance. But this just would not do in the case of priests as well as relatives living quite close. Aital had perforce to overcome his embarrassment and go himself. In point of fact, the news of his going in for a second marriage had already spread from the east coast to the west, what with the ostentatious pandal in front of his house and the wireless communi-

cation of the previous night. So much so that even as Aital approached with his 'akshata' cup, the invitee would himself volunteer with the words, 'All right, I shall attend'. All that was left for Aital to do was to specify the time of the wedding.

The same sort of welcome awaited him wherever he went. Though there was hardly any time for a chat, he would start saying, as if to subdue the misgivings in his own mind, 'This was very much against my wishes. But, as the saying goes, a man with no son forgoes salvation. My sister pressed me hard. Parvati, too, insisted'. He managed this way to present an acceptable case for a second marriage. Besides, the bride's family hailed from remote Padumunnoor and so, there was also the need to explain away why he had to go that far. He would confide. 'They, too, are people of Kota. It is only that they reside at present in the midst of a Shivalli community. How pious they are! They are, by the grace of god, very well placed, too. Any number of cocoanut, mango and jackfruit and honne trees! Though the place goes by the name of West munnoor, it is infact East munnoor!'

Some of the invitees were old friends who had not yet forgotten his first marriage. They muttered, plaintively, 'your first marriage, your father, Kodanda, arranged during the rains when no human being could stir out. And now, you are getting married at Padumunnoor or Vadabandeshwar, places where decrepit people like us can hardly walk to.' Aital was not found wanting in allaying their fears. He made courteous overtures: 'Would you call this distance? You take the boat here on the river and in a single puff of the wind, you are in Thonse. Their house is only just four steps away from Thonse. Do not disoblige me pleading distance.'

He had left his house in the morning and by evening when he returned he had completed the work of inviting. Immediately after he had left, Seenamaiya too, had set out to Coondapur for the Saturday fair,

taking with him four big bags. It was midnight by the time he reached. Hangarkatte on his return journey on a bullock cart loaded with tamarind, chilies, sweet potatoes and the like, purchased at Coondapur. Taking the boat there, he arrived at the approaches of Aital's house and calling out to people asleep in their houses close by 'Eh, Soora, Eh, Kala !' managed to have the goods carried to the pandal. By that time it was daybreak. 'Let us give sleep a miss. Sleep is no great matter.' He said and waking up Aital sat down to a chat. He gave a graphic account of the fair and boasted of how he beat down prices almost by half. He narrated how on the way the bullock had stopped in its tracks because of a lame foot. He explained how at Hangarkatte he had to cry himself hoarse to find a boat. Now he wanted to know what he had to do next. 'Who have been invited?', he asked, ' Who else need to be invited? I shall do the inviting in respect of the villages on the coast, Manur, Padukere, Kodi, Kanyana. I shall leave in the morning and shall be back for lunch.'

'Do you remember the matter of appalams?' he enquired, of Sarasoti and said, We need a thousand of them. It is true that we being the groom's side our responsibility is much less. Nevertheless, we should expect, shouldn't we, six hundred guests at the 'Samavartan' and later at the reception. Though many of the invitees may choose not to attend the wedding at the bride's place on account of the distance, no one will miss the dinners here. There will sure be a big crowd at Aital's for these dinner's.

Sarasoti explained, 'We have already prepared fried rice and urud flour. We shall complete making appalam's and savouries by this evening. It is no big deal.' Seenamaiya could only exclaim in admiration, 'What a sister!' On her side, Sarasoti asked Seenamaiya to enquire of Aital whether he had taken steps regarding jewellery. She said, 'He may think it impertinent of us if we raise the topic ourselves. Whatever the amount of gold the bride's family will put on her, should we not, on our part present a pair of bangles, black beads,

gold mangalya and a gold necklace? Doesn't the goldsmith need time to prepare them? The wedding is only three days away'.

'I agree with Sarasoti, said Seenamaiya and told Aital, 'It ill accords with our position to go empty - handed. It is time we got ready at least the few ornaments she suggests.'

'Well', said Aital, 'I am not the fool Sarasoti thinks I am When I did inviting yesterday, I also contacted the goldsmith, Gunda, got him the required quantity of gold and left strict instructions to have the entire jewellery ready by the day after tomorrow afternoon.'

'This brother of mine, Seenamaiya, does not breathe a word to us, women.'

'Stop this nonsense, Sarasoti. Where is the time both to tell and do? The moment I fetched you from Mandarti I had to take my bath and leave on a round of invitations. Was there time to chat? What can a man do if people like you cannot grasp things?'

'All right. But what have you done about this other matter?'

'Which matter?'

'Should Paroti attend this wedding or not?'

'What are you suggesting? Have I decided on the marriage because I do not hove her any more? I have gone ahead in this matter only to beget a son who can perform my obsequies and hers, too.'

'That is not what I mean. My question is simple. If she has to come, should she come with her neck and wrists bare? Tell me, What jewellery have you given her? Should you not give her at least half the jewellery you plan to give your new wife? Won't the blessed

women attending the wedding notice the presence or the absence of gold about her?

'Sarasoti, do understand. It is not as if I don't want to get her any gold jewellery. It is just a question of time. How much do you think you can have prepared in two day's time?'

'Time enough. The priority is now for the bride's jewellery. The rest can wait till later.'

'On the contrary, in matters little whether Paroti is provided or not provided jewellery later. You are well aware that she has never been the one to hanker after any jewellery. She has not asked even now. But is it not for us to think for her?'

'Sister dear, will it do if I fetch for her a handsome set of jewellery from the Holla's?'

'All right. Anyway, the invitees won't be able to distinguish the old from the new.'

Aital had found it hard to counter Sarasoti's plea on behalf of Paroti. It was not in him to indulge in extravagant expenditure. He was prepared only to make a show in the presence of his relations. He was firmly convinced that it made little difference whether he did or did not provide jewellery for Paroti, only, he lacked the courage openly to say so. He knew well enough that once Sarasoti deserted him, his game would almost be up, So he sat staring speechlessly at Seenamaiya. As for Seena, he could always match any situation with a suitable act. He came out with an expedient compromise, a 'Banker panchayat' as it is called, 'Do this, Aital' he said, 'fetch the gold jewellery today from the Holla's. Take it to Gunda and have him polish it.'

When Sarasoti objected that it was after all borrowed gold and would

have to be returned, he said, 'The rains will start soon after the wedding. The goldsmith will then be without work. There wouldn't be farm work either. You have only to get him the gold. What I suggested is only a way to get through the present impasse.'

Sarasoti went in, feeling that there was no hope of success with such a fox near by. 'In the morning, Aital, 'Seenamaiya said, 'let us festoon the doors with mango leaves. The first thing now is to wash our faces and enjoy some green grass drink. You can extract any amount of work from me once the drink is in.'

Aital said with a laugh, 'Seena, whatever happens, don't turn your back on me. Well, let me see about the green grass drink or in the alternative about some curds and fried rice.' He was pleased with the way Seena had silenced Sarasoti and felt that he was the proper man to see to the wedding arrangements.

When the words 'curds and fried rice' fell on his ears, Seena readily agreed. 'I do prefer curds and fried rice. Do you suppose I had anything to eat last night? The entire day I toiled in the sun feeding my stomach with only water. So, let us for now cool our stomachs with curds and rice. We can have the green grass drink later, when the sun is well up; green grass water is sheer nectar to ward off the sun's heat.' Then they left for washing their faces and their different morning labours.

Three days were spent in preparations and the evening of the fourth day witnessed the commencement of the wedding celebrations. When at the Samavartan ceremony, Aital stood suitably adorned with wheel-like ear-rings, anklets on his feet, a turban and a palm leaf fan in his hand, Paroti standing at the kitchen window gazed at him without batting her eyelids. The mystery of what lay behind such intent gazing lay too deep for words.

The memory of fifteen or twenty years ago pictured before her eyes

a much younger man similarly costumed who had come to her house in a palanquin in pouring rain to wed her. People around her were fidgeting for want of shelter from the rain but she had managed to steal a glimpse of him. Memories, too, crowded in on her of her first arrival in her husband's house and of her yearly yearnings for a child. She experienced yet again the deep anguish of her barrenness. What comfort could she hope for now? Would she be happy with a co-wife? Would this not mean trouble to come? She might reconcile herself to the situation but what guarantee was there that the co-wife would respect her as her senior? Would not her husband's love drift from her and find fresh anchorage in the new wife?

And for all her sufferings, what compensation? That there could be a son to perform their obsequies? It serve the purpose in Aital's case. The son to come would be the son of his loins. But he would in no way be related by blood to her. This chain of logic flooded and blurred her eyes. She did not feel like looking at her husband nay more, her husband, now a second time bridegroom. As many of the invitees, near and dear, had arrived, it was time for her to attend to their needs.

Where was Sarasoti all this while? Wasn't she anxious to witness her brother's second campaign? She had more important work to attend to. One had to see that the appalam's came off the pan crackling. It had also to be ensured that the huge quantity of appalam's prepared by the cooks impressed by Seenamaiya's pompous talk did not get exhausted at the Samavartam dinner itself.

When her wretchedness pressed on her less, it occured to Paroti, too, that if she did not register her presence, it might lead people to conjecture that the marriage might not have been arranged with her consent. So to avert such speculation she suppressed her grief and walking towards the cooks she joined Sarasoti who sat assisting the cooks in frying the appalam's, coughing all the while owing to the smoke. When her eyes too, smarted and gathered tears, she left the

place and went up to the pandal, where she began to move about putting on a joyous expression and making conversation with her neighbours. One of them, a wedded lady, confided in her,'If suitably adorned with gold jewellery, your husband would look no more than twenty.' At this, Paroti, too, burst out laughing.

The Samavartan ceremony over, it was time to serve dinner. Two hundred banana leaves were laid but they did not suffice as more and more people kept coming. Aital conveyed his anxiety to Seenamaiya. The preparations might run out and prompt precautionary measures had to be taken. Seena was ready as ever with plausible assurances. He instructed the cooks to start serving. After the first batch of two hundred guests had their food, another two hundred sat down to have theirs. Seena put the whole blame on the cooks, saying that if they had served the food piping hot straight from the oven, the same quantity would have sufficed. Aital was at his wit's end. Sarasoti's intervention saved the day. She had the soup diluted and got supporting quantities of salt, chillies and tamarind added. She arranged for additional quantities of rice to be prepared. The smoke from the improvised kitchen spread over the whole village. It was also announced that there would be no third batch. Everyone including Seenamaiya sat down with the second batch. The food was served piping hot and with unusual speed so that even before one course was consumed the next course was being served. The guests were forced to cope with the sweet milk dish of payasam whose quantity incidentally had been augmented with the addition of more jaggery, even before they had dealt with the deliciously sour dish of 'palidya'. It was possible this way to feed one and all.

It was Seena who claimed full credit, saying 'Do you now appreciate the wisdom behind my advice? In fact, if my advice had been followed even earlier, there would have been no need for the second batch to wait. Do bear this in mind on the day of the reception.' While everyone else held his tongue, Sarasoti was remarking in a low voice,

'Would it not be better not to invite so many people instead of treating them this way?' Seena was not one to be discomfited. He replied with a laugh, 'If people want to eat their full and belch, they should go to Udupi for lunch on Madhvanavami or have food at the royal courtyard there.'

Seena was in a big hurry. The bridegroom's procession had to be arranged. At least a hundred guests had stayed on in the pandal. Transport had to be found for them for a distance of two leagues. The earlier understanding was that most people would walk along the coast till they passed the bay and reached Thonse and would then proceed to the bride's village. This did not suit Seena. He had set his heart on taking the bridegroom and his family as well as the other processionists with him at their head by boat on the river to Thonse with the band playing. The procession should, if he had his way, pass the storage depots at the port. The problem was that only four boats had been engaged. Moreover, one of the boats was reserved for wedded women carrying auspicious articles, the band and the fireworks party. The other three could all accommodate no more than sixty people even if they were rammed in like rice in a bag. In the circumstances how was one to arrange river transport for the nearly two hundred people swelling the procession?

What the resourceful Seena did was to go out of the pandal, scan the horizon in the west and returning warn Aital that it was getting dark and to suggest to those footing it to start immediately. 'It takes long to cross the river at the bay. The Hangarkatte sowcar had despatched all the boats to Kokkarne to fetch rice, betraying the trust we had placed in him. In spite of my best efforts I could arrange only four boats. Hence I suggest that only the family and Gurikar's might go by boat and the rest take the Bengre route.' These words were uttered in such a thundering voice that they could be heard everywhere as if the announcement had been tom-tomed, 'It is no use waiting any longer,' thought many of the assembled people and they left by the

Bengre route, while a few having second thoughts reluctantly returned home. Seena whispered in the ears of the chosen few that they might come by boat. There were some, however, who yet waited hoping to find room in the boats. They would get back if their luck failed them.

A few minutes before sunset, the procession started with fireworks flaring. When it reached the river bank, there was a scrimmage at the boat-stand with the people rushing into the boats, with the result that there was no room for the bridegroom himself. Seena was nonplussed. He could not force anyone to vacate his seat. All were men of consequence. He was at his wit's end. Aital, utterly helpless, said, 'Seena, let the boats proceed. We shall also take the Bengre route.' The people in the boats felt highly embarrassed and got down. Then again Seena announced in his stentorian voice, 'One of the boats is for the bridegroom's party, the married women bearing auspicious articles, the band and the cash box. Another is for the fireworks party. A third is for women only. All the others should accommodate themselves the best way they can.'

All got seated, some murmured that seated this way they might find themselves married to the river. Seena was annoyed and said reprovingly, 'One expects only inauspicious words from people in our villages, never auspicious ones,' A few did get down and offered to walk all the way for fear of drowning. The sun set. The procession started. The band played. The boats sailed. The fireworks flared and banged. People stood all along the way watching the procession. It was no surprise that in the dark the bridegroom appeared to all the onlookers to be quite young.

It took only a few minutes for the boats to reach Hangarkatte. As they approached it Seena said in his loud voice, 'No matter if a little more oil gets used. Let the torches blaze away. Let us have the sowcar of Hangarkatte witnessing our procession.' There were more fireworks,

too. Some rockets were also fired. The pipers were encouraged to play more loudly. Though the boats passed too far from the port for people there to hear the pipers and the fireworks racket, Seena for once felt supremely happy that the procession was being watched by the whole world.

While approaching Thonse, Seena arranged for each boat to display four lighted torches. Reflected in the water as they moved, the lights were a beautiful sight. Besides, it was summer and the salt backwaters glowed with phosphorescence. The boat's course glittered like a sheet of light. While the men in the boats sat chewing betel leaves the women sang auspicious songs. Only those who carried auspicious articles had nothing much to do, they gazed at their boats bearing lighted torches and thought, 'If only these brahmins were not here we could have caught umpteen fish! Look, what lovely fish and lines and lines of them!'

On reacing Thonse, Seena exlaimed rapturously that such a splendid procession deserved a much longer route and that he would not have minded if they had another four leagues more to traverse. Every one got down hurriedly. Those who had reached earlier, poor fellows, were seated in a line at the edge of a paddy field waiting for the bridegroom. It would have been improper of them to have proceeded to the bride's place ahead of him. Hundreds of torches blazed. The procession took on the dimensions of an expedition. It wended its way, festoons and banners waving. The bridegroom was borne in a palanquin. Seena marched right in front with the cash box carried before him. He wore a thick silver waiststring and a borrowed gold necklace which he flaunted for all to see.

Aital was in raptures over the royal pomp and ostentation of the procession, all of which he had so sorely missed on the occasion of his first marriage owing to torrential rains.

Night had already advanced by the time the procession reached Padamunnoor and halted in the paddy filled in front of the bride's party's pandal. Trumpets, horns and a variety of other instruments blared from both the sides and it looked as if there was a battle on between them. Women's singing and the fireworks racket added to the glamour. As Aital was welcomed and received into the pandal, it looked as if he had again regained his youth. Seena was conspicuous with a walking stick with a silver-rimmed top.

Whoever would think looking at this marriage pandal that what was being celebrated was a second marriage? The entire pandal was equipped with a gorgeous canopy and the dais was decorated with brightly coloured tin sheets. Separate sections had been demarcated for priests, for men, for women and for men and women of the lower castes, who sat gazing at the show with wide-eyed wonder.

Thr bridegroom, for once, was supremely happy and so, too, was Seena. Even Aital's mother-in-law-to-be who could have been excused if she had felt less than happy was quite pleased. It would have been natural for her for feel a bit disappointed that the bridegroom was well past his youth and had also an earlier wife living. But any such anxiety was dispelled by the style in which Aital sat, fully adorned and by the impression he gave of a man younger than the young with his impressive stance at the 'Dhara' ceremony as he accepted the offer of the bride and, above all, by the assiduity with which Paroti herself attended on the members of the party. She was relieved that her daughter, Satyabhama had really found a happy home. Any lingering misgivings, too, were cleared when Paroti herself brought the gold ornaments for the bride and put them on the bride with her own hands.

The only thing that caused Sarasoti distress was that while no fresh jewellery, had been got prepared for Paroti, even the prospect that had been held forth of obtaning for her a loan of some jewellery from

the Holla's had for some uncertain reason not materialised. However, she herself tried to comfort Paroti, saying 'Are you still a child? Why long for such grandeur now?'

Tightfisted, though, naturally Aital was, he had been constrained to spend beyond his means on this marriage. Besides, how could one keep a check on the expenditure with a man like Seena in charge of the arrangements? The marriage pandal was packed to the full with people both near and dear to him and those who held him in high esteem as their priest. Presents of angavastrams and blouse pieces were heaped on him and his bride. On the bridegroom's side there was a liberal distribution of 'Dakshina'.

During all the four days of the marriage celebrations, Seena preferred to shuttle between the bride's and bridegroom's villages, taking the boat both ways, tiring as it was, rather than cut down expenses by staying at Padamunnoor itself in the lodge arranged for him. Special boats were also commissioned to transport prestigious guests by boat after the first two days. Boats were allowed to touch at Hangarkatte though there was little to do at the port. The procession arranged on the third day, the day of the ceremony of milk and ghee, impressed onlookers as even twice as grand as the first day's. Seena discovered a way to make that night's procession, too, quite specatular. He had dry branches from all the palm trees cut for preparing lighted torches and with each man carrying two torches a procession of fifty men looked like a procession of five hundred.

The fourth day's procession, too, was arranged in a similar style. Padamunnoor Madappiah had special sweets like 'Ladu' and 'Holige' served at the day's lunch. Seena's esteemed status as the head of the bridegroom's party was fully recognised. There were standing instructions to supply him with a couple of tender coconuts whenever he should feel thirsty.

The only event to cause any anxiety during the entire course of the marriage celebrations occured on the fourth evening soon after the ceremony of the bestowing of blessings on the bridal couple, when Seena fell all of a sudden in a faint. He had been enjoying betel with areca and chatting when whether because of something in the betel not agreeing with him or because of the occasional vertiginous effect of the areca, he collapsed, his head in a whirl and his sight blurred. People, the bridegroom included, crowded around him expressing grave concern and offering help. 'Alas! what has happened to you?' cried Sarasoti rushing to his side in alarm. 'It would be disastrous', she continued, 'in case what has caused the trouble is the tiny betel leaf snake. He should immediately be dosed with water with areca moistered in it to get him to vomit whatever has gone in'. The suggestion found favour with Aital, who had been fervently praying to God to save the life of the man who had come all the way to assist him. Paroti pledged to offer fruits and coconuts to her deity, Arama of Aralu.

Shuddering at the prospect of having to stomach such a distasteful drink, Seena speedily opened his eyes. People dispersed, relieved. Servants came up with sweet smelling 'lavancha' fans with scented water sprinkled over them and started fanning him. There was relief all around with the threat of a mishap happily averted.

On the fourth night the bridegroom's party left for home. The return journey was accomplished with no less pomp that the forward one. While Paroti bravely made conversation with the bride, Aital and Seena bequiled the way with an overall review of the celebrations. Aital's joy knew no bounds over the alliance which he thought simply divine. Seena would have wholeheartedly agreed but for his grouse over the cooking. In his opinion too much jaggery had been used. Aital was willing to grant that they could have been a little more sparing with it. A profesional who happened to overhear them suggested a remedial measure, 'Seena', he said, 'see that in your

reception dinner due to be arranged next a little more pepper is used. It will neutralise the excess jaggery now consumed.' Aital laughed at this ribbing but Seena moodily held his tongue. The reason, though none could fashion it then, became common knowledge over the next few days. What Seena missed was being deferentially addressed as Seenappamaiya by one and all at Padamunnoor. Once again to be familiarly called Seena or at the most Seenamaiya as in the past after his return to the village offended his newborn sense of dignity. From that day onwards, he used to turn a deaf ear whenever hailed as Seena or Seenamaiya.

With Satyabhama's entrance into Aital's family, her 'gotra' naturally changed. Further, she started putting on the vermilion mark on her forehead in a horizontal line as did Paroti, instead of, as she used to do at Padamannoor, in a vertical fashion, which did much to guarantee her complete immunity to the infectiousness of the Shivalli lifestyle.

Nevertheless, the allegation did the rounds, made by those habitually induiging in backbiting, that in his anxiety to secure a big bride Aital had allied himself with semi-Shivallians. One could hear them complaining, 'Is it proper for a Vaidik like Aital to set such an example?'

K.Shivarama Karnath
Tr. by K. Narasimha Murthy.

THE STORY OF JOGI ANJAPPA'S HEN

- MASTI VENKATESHA IYENGAR

Jogi Anjappa is the oldest among the old men of the village. In any conversation, Anjappa joins in, and talks about this and that of his boyhood. None of those who had seen them happen are alive now. Anjappa says he was a little boy during the 1957 Sepoy Mutiny. If you ask him his age, he says it might be about a hundred. That has been his age for the last ten years now. Most importantly, because of his age for the last ten years now. Most importantly, because of his age, he has gained the right to advise anyone on any occasion. Even if others have any doubts about this right of his, he has none. If one does not immediately agree to do as he advises, he says "What is this? You know, my beard had turned grey when your father was a little boy, and you make light of what I tell you?" Perhaps because of his wide range of experience, his advice is usually sensible. Anjappa is as old as Jambavantha and as intelligent as Hanumantha.

Three days ago, Anjappa had gone to Rangappa's house. Rangappa had received an order some days ago saying he had been appointed the bench Magistrate of our taluk. The people of the village were very happy that their village accountant had now got the right to punish people. In their view, it is a great power. If nothing else, a person with such a power is equal to a Subedar. Earlier, only a Subedar and his superiors had the right to award punishment. Now, the government has taken away this power even from the Subedar. So, in a

way, a post with such a power, is a bit superior to that of the Subedar. Hearing that the village accountant had got special honour, Anjappa, the grand old man of the village, went to speak to him and advise him.

Seeing Anjappa, Rangappa said, "Come, Anjappa, sit down."

Anjappa : What, my son, I hear you've got a Magistrate's job, I'm very happy.

Rangappa : That's right Anjappa. But what's the use? One has to work free. No money, nothing.

Anjappa : No money? Why?

Rangappa : This magistrate's job is an honorary job. The government doesn't give you a salary for it.

Anjappa : Why won't there be any money in the job if there is no salary? Don't people who get a salary treat it as money for their extra expenses? They actually earn ten times their salary.

Rangappa : That was all in the past. Bribe and the rest don't work these days.

Anjappa : It will work for those who will make it work, not for the rest. All that apart, can you now stop even a Subedar and fine him if you get angry with him?

Rangappa : You could have done it if you were the Magistrate I'm only a village accountant, If I fine the Subedar, the Magistrate will say I have not written the Khathe right and kick me out of the job.

Anjappa thought it was fair enough. "O Yes" he said, taking out his

pouch in which he carried betel nuts and betel leaves, and started picking out nuts and leaves. Three fourth of the nuts and leaves in his pouch are old and withered like him. Though he buys fresh leaves now and then, he always uses the old, dry ones because he does not want to throw them away, By the time the dry leaves are eaten, the fresh leaves would also have started drying. So, even when there are some fresh leaves in the pouch, he eats the dry ones. Even the betel nuts in his pouch are well known. Ignorant people think that betel nuts are things one chews and swallows with betel leaves. But the main purpose of a betel nut is only to make the mouth water. It does not melt. It should soften and get mixed with the betel leaf mash only after staying soaked in the mouth for a long time. If it softens as soon as you put it into your mouth, how many betel nuts would people who eat pan every minute of the hour need? Anjappa put a dry leaf and a nut into his mouth, took out a little lime from the lime box and said, "Besides all that, I came to tell you one thing."

Rangappa : What is it Anjappa? Tell me. You are an experienced man and you know a hundred things people like us ought to know.

Anjappa : That's why I came here. Now that you are a Magistrate, when people stand before you, you should find out who is an honest man and who is a thief, before you punish them. You shouldn't go by what the police and lawyers say and punish people. This is what I came to tell you.

Rangappa : That's right. But you can know whether one is a thief or an honest man only by what people tell you. What else can a Magistrate do?

Anjappa : If he is a Magistrate, he should himself think about what could be the truth. He should ask the person

brought before him what he has to stay.

Rangappa : Anjappa, if you won't get angry. I will ask you something.

Anjappa : Ask me son. Why should I get angry?

Rangappa : Have you ever faced a trial before a Magistrate?

Anjappa : Yes, my dear, that's what I came to tell you. They made a case saying I stole a hen. I said I didn't and they insisted that I did. In the end, they said I was guilty. They said they would let me go if I paid a fine of twenty rupees or else put me in jail. I paid the fine and came away without saying a word.

Rangappa : How did they say you had stolen the hen? Was the hen found with you?

Anjappa : Yes, my son. I was caught because because that bitch of a hen was with me.

Rangappa : That means you stole it.

Anjappa : That's exactly what I am trying to tell you. The hen was with me. But I hadn't stolen it.

Rangappa : In that case, tell us the whole story in detail, let's listen. And Anjappa told him.

It all happened about forty years ago. Anjappa was then middle aged. Those days he used to wander from village to village. His jogi profession was such. It meant dressing well, singing songs sung since the days of grandfather, and begging, with a cloth beg slung

across his left shoulder and a stringed kindari instrument on his right. Since the days of Anjappa's grandfather and great grandfather, Jogis would only beg and not till land, In these degenerate days, even jogis have turned farmers. "It's like Brahmins keeping shoe shops in towns, "says Anjappa. We might think that begging is a lowly profession. But Anjanappa wouldn't agree with that . "Being a Jogi is not an easy thing. Wandering with an uncle or a father for twenty years carrying his kindari, singing songs with him and learning the profession from him are not simple things. Any boy can stand behind a plough, twist the bullock's tail and say 'Cho, Cho' to make it run. But to learn to sing, don't you need a proper tongue, don't you need the brains? Will it come if you simply say 'Umm'? Can everybody pronounce 'Lakshmi'? If you ask them to say it, they will say 'Ksmi.Ksmi. As if they are sneezing. You think it's easy to turn the tongue the right way and say' 'Draupadi Devi'? By the time I could say I knew the profession well. I was twentyfive. Only then did my father say, "Now it's all right for you to go alone," Anjappa says. Becoming a Jogi was as difficult as getting a B.A degree now. I think Anjappa used to wander about sixty to seventy villages around here. A Jogi doesn't start out from his house like an ordinary beggar does. A Jogi who goes out to sing paints his eyebrows, cheeks, moustache and lips as laid down by tradition, like a person who plays the king's role in a drama. A Jogi is neither a Shaivite nor a Vaishnavite. Neither does he worship the lesser gods, nor has he given up any of those gods. So Vibhuti, Kumkum and turmeric are all there on his face, mixed together. With all this, he also wears kajal in his eyes because the eyes of a Jogi are very cruel and the kajal wards off its evil effects on people. Especially, while singing the dialogues of Bheema and Hanuman. If there is no kajal in his eyes and his powerful gaze falls on people, they would faint on the spot. Like his special make-up, he should also wear special kind of clothes. His turban should be made of pieces of cloth of at least three colors. Anjappa was handsome when he was young. When he went singing in the villages in this costume, women and children would flock to

him. Even the women of the house of the village chief would invite him over to sing in front of their house. "I have sung many songs and made many happy" Anjappa often says. In those days, forty years ago, the profession of a Jogi was as its peak. A Jogi was wanted by many.

Kalapura was one of the village Anjappa went to. That is , I am not telling you the actual name of the village. Kalapura is an imaginary name. It was a reasonably big village. So. whenever Anjappa went there, he should stay there for a couple of days. I told you earlier that Anjappa was handsome. That is something to be kept in mind. And when he went to the village with all his makeup, he naturally had a number of women admirers like there are women admirers for handsome drama actors. if the woman was a little old he wouldn't mind chatting with her for a while. Because nobody would reprimand him for doing that, But if she was young, he would hesitate. Because, if the men of the house saw them, they would say, "What is this Jogi? Instead of going away with what they give you, you are flirting with the women of the house? Get going." Outsiders would say, "What Jogappa, not bad!" For a person who lives off begging, both kinds of remarks would make things difficult. Once, when he had keen to Kalapura, the village chief's wife called him and listened to him singing. She was the chief's third wife. After his singing, she gave Anjappa betel leaves and he sat there a while chewing them. The chief came there then and shouted at Anjappa. Anjappa didn't say anything in return. But when the chief started saying obscene things, Anjappa got annoyed and said. "What are you saying Sir? What do you take your wife to be? If you are such a decent man, you would tell your wife and not scold me." "Careful Jogi, I will make you pay for it," warned the chief. Anjappa too said a couple of things in reply, took his cloth bag and left.

After this incident, when Anjappa went to Kalapura the next couple of times, nothing special happened. When he went there the third

time, while he was singing in the front yard of a house, a girl from the neighbour's house stood at her door listening to him. When he was about to leave after finishing his song, she called him and gave him alms. The next day, when Anjappa went there again she called him, made him sing in front of her house and gave him alms. It was quite a big house in the village. Anjappa asked around whose house it was and whose daughter the girl was. Some lucky souls. I can't remember their names now. The girl's husband had gone astray. She was not too good a girl herself. But Anjappa did not know this then. There were only three people in the house - the girl, her husband and her mother-in-law. They had poultry. When Anjappa went to Kalapura the next time, he went to her house again. She was a beautiful girl. Anjappa has no evil intentions. But because she liked him so much, he wanted to sing for her and make her happy. After singing for all the others in the locality and after they all went away, he would sit in front of the girl's house chewing betel leaves. One day, while he sat there, she came to the door and said, "Jogappa, before you leave the village, come here once," "Why?, I am leaving the village now," said Anjappa. "Your songs have made me so happy. I though many times that I should give you something. But you should take it and leave immediately. If my mother-in-law comes to know about it, she will make trouble , "she said. Anjappa felt too scared to accept. But he didn't want to say no to her either. Before he could say anything the girl went in and called him. He went in. She put a hen into his bag and said, "Go away, go away." Anjappa simply started out without thinking about where to go and what to do. His heart was beating very fast in the fear that someone might catch him. The girl called out from outside, "Careful Jogappa, don't you tell anybody that I gave it to you." Anjappa left immediately without saying anything. There was a well half a mile away from the village. He walked till there without stopping anywhere. There, he sat in the shade of a tree thinking about everything that had happened, chewing betel leaves.

Something like this hadn't happened to Anjappa before. He hoped such a thing wouldn't happen to him again. The hen was a good thing all right. But why would anybody give it to a Jogi? Giving alms in the open was one thing. But giving it in stealth was another. The first was not cheating. But the second had an element of cheating in it. Anjappa was very fond of the girl. Such a nice girl! Such a beautiful girl! She was like a ripe lemon. With such a wife at home, why had her husband turned such a loafer, he wondered. The world is like that. If you have wealth, you squander it away and if you are poor, you steal.

Lost in such thoughts, Anjappa forgot that it was not safe for him to stay there. After sometime, someone who was coming from the village stopped near him and asked, "What Anjappa, why are you sitting here? " "Just like that" said Anjappa. "Your bag got filled?" Asked the villager. "Not bad," said Anjappa. The villager peeped into the bag asking if he had got ragi there. And there was a hen. "What is this Jogappa, there's a hen here!" Said the passerby. Jogi's heart skipped a beat. "Yes sir, somebody gave it to me." He said. Sensing that he would get into trouble if he stayed back talking, he took the bag and got ready to leave, Then, he saw an old woman hurrying towards him with somebody from the direction of the village. Behind them, some distance away, the girl who had given him the hen was coming, Anjappa felt weak in the knees. He couldn't walk a step. He immediately knew that there was trouble. As he stood staring at those who were coming towards him, the girl gesticulated to him not to tell them that she had given the hen. The old woman came close and asked, "Is he the Jogappa?". The man with him was the village policeman. "Yes," he said. "Jogappa, have you seen one of our hens by any chance?", the old woman asked Anjappa. "Some damned hen has got into my bag. I didn't even know. Just now this man told me," said Anjappa. "But you said somebody gave it to you," said the passerby . "Ayyo, people hesitate to give me even a handful of rice to a Jogi. Who will give me a hen?" said Anjappa. The policeman

opened the bag. The hen lay inside in a semi-conscious state. "Not bad! You let him near the house thinking he only sings and he has started stealing hens," said the old woman, "Come to the village. Let's talk to the village chief. So much for your jogihood!" "I didn't steal the hen. If it's your hen, you can take it. Don't bother me", he said. "What sir, you talk like a very respectable man. If you didn't steal it, how is it that it's with you?" the old woman asked. Turning to the girl, she asked. "Isn't that out hen?". "I don't know, it doesn't look like ours. Or, may be, it does. Maybe, Jogappa bought it somewhere," she stammered. "Why all this? Let's go the village chief and tell him everything. Let him do what he thinks is right." said the policeman. Anjappa couldn't see a way out. He knew that the chief bore a grudge against him. Thinking he was in deep trouble, he took his bag and walked with them to the village.

It's no use telling all that happened there. Many villagers who had lost their hens earlier, and even those who hadn't, said they remembered missing their hens when Anjappa was in the village. The village chief said, "What Jogi? You sang all these days didn't you? Now I will send you to jail and there you can sing your songs." The police station was not too far away. They sent the culprit there with a report and the stolen property. Taking statements and all the rest followed.

Anjappa returned to his village on bail promising them that he would come to the court on the day of the hearing.

The hearing took place. What was there for a hearing anyway? The hen had disappeared from the old woman's house. She had identified the hen. It was found with Jogappa. And three people were witness to this. The Magistrate asked Anjanappa what he had to say.

Anjappa : I don't know sir. May be, while I was singing the hen got into my bag because it is warm inside. I didn't

realise and I took the bag away.

Magistrate : What a tall story you are telling me. How can a hen come and sit in your bag all on its own? Tell me the truth.

Jogappa : My Lord, I am telling the truth, I'll swear by any god, I didn't steal the hen.

Magistrate : Okay, Let's assume you didn't steal the hen, But surely, the hen couldn't have come into your bag by itself? Then, did someone give it to you?

He was about to tell the Magistrate that the girl gave it to him. But he remembered her telling him and gesticulating to him not to tell anybody. Poor thing! She had given him a hen in some heady moment. Why give her away, he thought and stopped himself. He kept quiet. The Magistrate again asked him if he had anything to say.

Anjappa : What do I tell you, Sir? You are the lord of justice. God should tell y ou what the truth is, I didn't steal

The Magistrate wrote a charge on him and asked him if he had any witnesses. "Ayyo, my lord, who will be my witness? only God is my witness." Said Anjappa. The Magistrate thought he talked very politely for a thief and said Anjappa had to pay a fine of twenty rupees or suffer imprisonment for fifteen days. Anjappa paid the fine and returned to his village with a long face.

3

As I said earlier, forty years have passed since all this happened. After telling this story, Anjappa said, "It is not enough to simply become a Magistrate. To punish the guilty and protect the poor is

the work of God. And when a human being is entrusted with this job, he should behave like God. He should always fear that he might go wrong. Otherwise, you might turn unjust like that Magistrate who almost handcuffed me."

I : What you say is right Anjappa. But how will the Magistrate know if you don't tell him?

Anjappa : If justice depends only on what people tell you, why do we need intelligent people like you? It is the job of a Magistrate to find out the truth,

I : So you paid the fine to save the girl's reputation. That was a good thing to do.

Anjappa : Ayyo, don't ask me about that. I believe she had a paramour and she had given him hens two or three times before. And whenever her mother-in-law asked her where the hens were, the girl would tell her that somebody had perhaps stolen them. The mother-in-law found it hard to believe. I later learnt that the girl had done all this thinking that she could cover her tracks by once showing the hen with somebody when it was missing from the house.

Rangappa : What? She gave you the hen and then complained to her mother-in-law herself.

Anjappa : Yes. That's what happened. The mother-in-law asked where the hen was. The daughter-in-law said she didn't know. The mother-in-law wanted to know if anybody had come there. The girl first said she didn't know and later said some Jogappa had come there. A neighbour said he had seen jogi hurrying

always from the direction of the house. Everything fell in place and I was caught.

Rangappa : Didn't you later go back and ask her why she did it?

"Son, you children are all still very young and I am an old man. Why ask me about my youth? I did go there, I asked her, and everything was over." said Anjappa. We didn't ask the details. After sometime, Rangappa said, "Okay, if they bring you before me, I will find out the truth and let you go". "Let that be, my son, why will I appear before any human being now? My Magistrate now is only our father, God Thimmappa of Tirupathi. I should go to him, fall at his feet and ask for his forgiveness even before he starts questioning me. And he will protect me," said Anjappa. We kept silent. Anjappa sat silently for sometime and then asked Rangappa, "Won't you even treat me to betel leaves for becoming a Magistrate?" Rangappa called a few boys who were around and asked them to get Anjappa betel leaves. Anjappa took the leaves and said, "Remember what I said. I will leave now" and went away.

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THE SPEAKING STONE

By Anandakanda

In our Kannada land there are innumerable speaking stones. Hero-stones, **Masti**-stones and **nisidhi**-stones declare the greatness of our heroic men and women and saints, thereby making us proud of them, whereas epigraphical stones declare the glory and gradeur of our culture. Leave aside these stones and look at the bare stones in front of every village-gate which hide a story beneath each one of them. One may see countless memorial stones in our land describing the stories of the **Ramayana** and the **Mahabharata.**

The stone about which I would like to talk now does not belong to this category. The story told and the principle taught by it are quite distinct. They teach the essence of humanism to all the orthodox people.

Gokavi belongs to Belgaum district. The speaking stone stands by the side of the highway from a village where one of my relatives lives, to Gokavi. The highway runs along the slope of the hill. You can see the stone at a distance of a couple of miles from the village. The highway is flanked by ranges of steep hills. The big boulders on the top of hills look like forts. One of the boulders was dislocated some time in the past - nobody knows when exactly - and slid down to the foot of the hill. It is so firm in its present position that it cannot be shaken even if it is dragged with ropes by half a dozen elephants.

The people of the region call it a 'witnessing stone', which spreads in the air a story in its silent language. The wayfarers can hear the story as long as the stone remains there:

Sankappa was an ordinary farmer in the village. He lives with his mother - old Lachamavva and his newly married wife, Gouri. I cannot point to the exact time when they lived. But the interesting story connected with their life is fresh in the minds of the local people and therefore, has kept them still as live characters. The local people never bother about the year or month or astral moments of when these characters lived. In my opinion, even others do not bother about these details.

Lachamavva, the mother-in-law treated her daughter-in-law Gouri as her own daughter, as the latter happened to be her near relative from her mother's side. Though born in a poor family, Gouri never lacked in beauty or character. Her complexion and chiselled features like eyes and nose would make her husband beam with a proud smile and swell his heart with happiness. Likewise, Gouri felt an inexhaustible enthusiasm for having married a husband of her liking. It was her habit to go to the field after completing the domestic chores and help her husband in his work. She, who spared her old mother-in-law from all strenuous jobs, was naturally able to earn the latter's love. If by rare chance the old woman sat before the mill-stone to grind the corn, she would only sing songs full of praise for her daughter-in-law.

Though three or four years went by after the arrival of Gouri to her husband's home, she did not show the signs of motherhood. Lachamavva prayed to the family deity Lord Mallikarjuna of Mt. Srisaila and the petty deities of the village. She took many a vow. The mother-in-law's eagerness for a grandchild intensified Gouri's desire also for motherhood. Is there any desire which will not be fulfilled when it grows intense?
Gouri conceived after a long time. There was great jubilation in the

family. The old Lachamavva began to dream of a grandson and other things. Gouri's feeling of excitement dispelled even her illness of 'pregnancy desires'. The excitement of the mother and the wife did not fail to influence Sankappa, the **karmayogi.**

Gouri completed the seventh moth of pregnancy and reached the eighth. As per the mother's instruction Sankappa went to the Gokavi market to fetch the provision required for routine consumption at home as well as for nursing the wife. In spite of her advanced pregnancy, Gouri would have her lunch and go to the farm with the lunch packet.

The farm lies in a long stretch along the foot of the hill and to the right side of the highway. Then it was the month of **kartik.** The jowar crop of the first half of the year stands abundant and ripe, surrounded by the rows of sesame which with their golden coloured flowers seem to offer plains worship to the earth-goddess of the plains. The ripe ears of corn stand erect and promise a life of security and happiness for the farmers.

Gouri would derive as much pleasure from the farm as from her pregnancy. That is the reason why she would go to the farm everyday in spite of her mother-in-law's dissuasion. That day Sankappa had gone to the market. Since the farm was situated at the slope of the hill, it needed to be watched diligently. That is the reason why Gouri came to the farm and kept a watch over it. She who stood there on the edge of the farm must have looked like an incarnation of the earth-goddess with her full curve of pregnancy to the poetic-minded spectators. But who in the village has ever the patience or time to stand and stare at her beauty! These villagers have to be busy labouring for the betterment of the world.

While keeping a watch on the farm, she uprooted some green paddy and collected it as it was required for the domestic cattle. She began to wait for the return of her husband from the market. The farmers of the neighbouring fields completed their quota of work and returned

home. The people returning from the market used to go past the farm. But Sankappa did not return. Even then Gouri believed that he would definitely come.

The evening sun disappeared behind the top of the hill. The golden tint of the sun spread in the western sky. Gouri feared that soon it would be dark everywhere. The distance to be covered to reach home was quite long. She, therefore, felt that it was not advisable to stay there waiting for the husband any longer. She collected the green paddy in a sheaf. There were four or five cattle at home. The sheaf was rather big and heavy. She tried to lift it on to her head, but could not. Unable to know what to do next, she just waited.

She saw an old man walking towards the village. Gouri gazed at him and recognised him as the senior Hanumappa of holeya caste. Though it was necessary to take his help for lifting the paddy sheaf, she hesitated to be polluted by the touch of a holeya. As it was growing dark, she could not tarry long on the farm. Helplessly, therefore, she called:

"Hanumappa, oh Hanumappa..."

Hanumappa stopped and asked, "What **Goudati**, dusk has already set in. Why are you still on the farm?"

"That's why I am ready to return home now. My husband has gone to the market. I waited for his return before dark. But he has not returned yet. I tried to lift this sheaf of paddy on to my head, but it does not budge even an inch. Would you mind helping me, Hanumappa?"

"What a request, **Goudati**? Shall I touch the sheaf and lift it on to your head? Moreover you are a pregnant woman. That, too, at this time of dusk!"

"What else can be done now, Hanumappa? The sheaf is very heavy.

There is nobody around here to help me. Darkness is descending on us so fast. Once I reach home, there'll be no problem. Now please help me to lift it.."

Hanumappa came ahead. He was an old man. He stood before Gouravva and looked at her. It was her first pregnancy. Beauty had blossomed on her healthy face. The golden light of the dusk added a new energy to her beauty. The old Hanumappa stood in front of her and gazed at her beauty. A desire was born in his heart. "Should this be not related to me also?" thought he. He was charged with emotion and spoke instantly:

"Mother, I shall lift the sheaf on to your head, but on one condition."

"What condition, man, that I have to fulfill?"

Hanumappa said smilingly, "It is simply this, mother. If you give birth to a daughter, you should marry her off to my grandson Chikkella."

Gouravva took it for a joke. She was a Lingayat whereas Hanumappa was a **holeya**. Is such an alliance ever possible, even in the future lives? Gouri also replied jokingly,

"Let the daughter be born and grow into a young girl... Only then can we think of marriage. Come on, lift this shear."

"No, no. It won't do. You must give me word today itself."

Thinking the whole thing to be a matter of a joke, Gouravva replied.

"Yes, man. I shall offer my daughter to your grandson. Come on, lift this sheaf. It's already growing dark."

"Is it true, **Goudati**?"
"Yes, yes, it's true. Come on, lift it up."

Hanumappa lifted the sheaf of paddy and kept it on her head. Gouravva carried it home. She did not divulge any detail of the conversation to anyone. She did not want anyone to know that she had touched a **holeya** at the time of dusk. She did not say a word about it to her mother-in-law or husband.

--- 2 ---

After the completion of nine months, Gouri gave birth to a female child. What does it matter to a woman desirous of motherhood whether the child is male or female? Though Lachamavva was a bit disappointed initially to know that her grandchild was female, she later felt happy to know that she became a grandmother and forgot the difference between male and female. Sankappa did not show any change in his usual behaviour. On the twelth day the old lady named the child as 'Madevi'. That day Hanumappa of holeya caste sent a skirt and a cap for the child and a blouse-piece for the mother-in-confinement. Likewise, all the well-wishers of Sankappa and Lachamavva had sent in gifts for the mother and her child. Though the old lady was surprised to receive gifts from Hanumappa, she kept quiet as she thought them to be one among many sent in by well-wishers.

Baby Madevi was a replica of her mother's beauty. Day by day, she grew into a beautiful girl. Gouravva watched the childplay of her daughter and forget the difference between day and night.

The festival of Nagapanchami came. There was a festive jubilation everywhere in the village. A day prior to the festival Hanumappa of holeya caste came to Sankappa's house and placed the usual gifts of 'wreath and blouse-piece' before Gouravva, as was the custom in the village. But Gouravva was surprised by this and asked him.

"What's this, Hanumappa? What have you brought?"

"Mother. I have brought 'wreath and blouse-piece' for my grand

daughter-in-law on the eve of the festival."

Though Gouri refused to accept these gifts, Hanumappa kept them before her and went away. "What a foolish old fellow is this? He is a holeya and yet has brought these gifts for his grand daughter-in-law. Everything is so comic "wondered Gouri and narrated all that had happened on the farm to her mother-in-law in a rather sketchy manner. The mother-in-law replied.

"The old fellow has brought the gifts out of affection. Let it be. Just keep them inside."

On the mother-in-law's approval, Gouri took in the gifts and kept them there. Hanumappa did not forget to present gifts on the festival of Panchami the second year also. The mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law to tittle at the oldman's gifts for the festival. They accepted them also just to satisfy that the crazy old man.

This summer Hanumappa decided to get his grandson married. He was very old and the grandson had lost his parents. If he died, who would arrange the marriage of his grandson? thought he.

One morning, Hanumappa got up early and came to Sankappa's house. Clad in new garments, with a black woolen blanket with silken border across his shoulder and a pair of new leather slippers on his feet, Hanumappa came and sat on the front platform of Sankappa's house. Sankappa was surprised at Hanumappa's new costume and asked him.

"What's this Hanumappa? You have come here in the early morning?"

Hanumappa replied, "I came here as I had to. I came to ask for the date of engagement. I have decided, sir, to celebrate the marriage of my grandson this summer."

"Is that so? In that case, you'll feed us with sweet cakes. Your grandson has lost his parents and is indeed a forlorn. You celebrate it this year itself. By the way, who is the bride selected by you?"

"Who else, Goudre, other than you own daughter? It has been agreed upon long back... I mean three years ago. I have presented the gifts of 'wreath and blouse-piece' for all the three festivals of panchami. Why, sir, whv are you talking as if you know nothing about it?"

Sankappa was indeed surprised beyond measure. Surprisedly he asked.

"What's this Hanumappa? Hope you have not gone mad on account of your old age. Do you know what you are talking about? Do you know the difference between your caste and mine? How is it possible for us to offer our daughter to your family?"

"See, Goudre, I am a man of my word. I don't care for caste or anything. Do you have the tradition in your family of keeping your word or not?"

"What do you mean by' keeping our word' fellow? Who has given word to you?"

"In the matters of alliance, it is the mother of the bride who gives her word, isn't it, Gouda?"

"What do you mean, fellow? Has the mother of the bride given you word that she would offer her daughter? Go away, you fool!" Hanumappa raised his voice and said.

"Please call Gouravva, the Goudati. Then you will understand everything."

Sankappa called his wife. Gouravva came out and asked why. Sankappa pointed to Hanumappa and asked.

"Do you hear what he is saying? What have you promised him?" GOURI was scared and asked back.

"What have I promised him?"

Hanumappa said in a firm tone, "Why, mother, why do you talk like this? That day when you wanted my help for lifting the paddy sheaf on to your head, you had given your word of honour. Did you forget that?"

"When did I have your help for lifting the paddy-sheaf, you old fellow? Are you in your senses or not"

"See, sister, ever since I was born or had my power of comprehension. I have never lied. That day I helped you by lifting the paddy sheaf on to your head only after taking a promise from you that you would offer your daughter in marriage to my grandson. You said "Yes" to my proposal. Didn't you?"

Gouravva felt deeply embarrassed. In her confusion she shouted, "Go away, old fellow! Do you want to smudge my face with black ink? Could I ever promise to offer my daughter to your grandson? What would the society say if I do so? Shouldn't you understand this?"

Hanumappa said in a quiet manner, "Mother, don't think that God, dharma or justice are dead and gone. I shall collect the elders of the village. Let the matter be decided by the Council of Elders!"

Hanumappa got up quickly and walked away. Sankappa was shocked beyond measure.

---- 3 ----

Hanumappa called a meeting of the Council of Elders in the village

office i.e., Chavadi. Gouravva and Sankappa were also sent for. The enquiry started. Hanumappa made his complaint as usual. But nobody was convinced by his complaint. The people who had gathered there began to laugh at his complaint and considered it as the babble of old age craziness. Hanumappa completed his complaint, which did not seem to be reasonable to the Council of Elders. Even then they listened to Sankappa's answer according to the formality of enquiry. Then they interrogated Gouravva who made a scene by crying and sobbing and counter-questioned, "Do I ever agree to give my daughter into a holeya family?" The Council of Elders who heard the clear words of Gouravva, could not believe in the veracity of Hanumappa's complaint. Everybody dubbed him as a liar. Even then the old man said firmly and loudly.

"Sirs, the Council of Five Elders are in no way different from Lord Parameswar. Ever since I had my power of comprehension. I have never spoken a lie in my life. Please do not look down upon my words simply because I am a holeya. Kindly investigate the matter thoroughly and settle the problem.

One of the Five Elders asked him. "How to settle your problem, Hanumappa? Does anyone promise to give her daughter into a family of holeyas? Fellow, what kind of a complaint is this?"

"This lady has really promised me so, sirs."

One of the elders thought a bit and said. "All right, Hanumappa. Supposing we accept your words as true, can you bring a witness who can certify about Gouravva's promise to you?"

"Witness! If there was any witness there around, this madam would not have taken my help to lift the paddy-sheaf. There is no human being who could be my witness. If my words are true, my Hill-Mother herself should act as my witness." replied Hanumappa.

"We just want a witness, no matter whether it is from the Hill-Mother or Hillock-Father" said the eldest member of the jury.

"In that case, let's walk towards the farm. I have also got to test whether it is true or false. If my words are proved false, I'll not speak truth any more."

All the jury got up and walked towards Sankappa's farm. Hanumappa led them. He was followed by Sankappa and Gouravva. When they reached the farm, the eldest of the jury stood at the edge of it and said.

"Hanumappa, come on, call our witness so that we can hear him."

"How shall I call the absent as witness, sirs? Hill-Mother herself is my witness."

"You call her herself, we do not refuse to hear her" said the Elder in a mocking tone.

Hanumappa come forward boldly and stood with joined palms at the Hill. He prayed with a loud voice.

"O my mother. Hill-Mother, If you are a goddess of truth, you please show some sign of truth to these Elders and convince them about the truth of my words."

Everybody was staring at the Hill eagerly. Nobody could believe Hanumappa's behaviour. They could not get any witness. The people who had gathered there taunted Hanumappa with sarcastic remarks. Once again Hanumappa bowed to the hill and prayed.

"O my Mother, please do not try me much. Kindly suggest a solution."

There was silence as usual. There was no suggestion of any solution. One of the jury said,

"Hanumapppa, don't you know this is Kali Yuga? How can you believe in these things now?"

Hanumappa's face grew red, his eyes flashed and his body trembled. Once again he joined his palms and shouted,

"Mother, I, your son, have never spoken a lie. It doesn't matter whether my grandson gets a bride or not. But mother mine, please don't make people believe that I am a liar."

Suddenly a roar of thunder was heard from the top of the hill. A lightning seemed to flash and dazzled the eyes of all the people gathered there. A big boulder slid down from the top of the hill and rested near the Elder.

All the five jury were surprised and terrified. Gouravva's heart fluttered and she bent her face. Sankappa stood there like a moron not understanding anything. Hanumappa prostrated on the ground and shed tears. The eldest of the jury rushed to Hanumappa and lifted him up by the hand.

The whole village accepted Hanumappa's words as true. The five Elders jury gave their judgement in his favour. Not merely this. All the villagers came together and celebrated the marriage of Madevi and Chikkella, with all the pomp.

The stone that spoke as a witness, stands there still today narrating its story. Those who wish to see it may see me for the special knowledge about it. Namaste

Tr. by Dr. Basavaraj Nalkar.

THE SANYASI

By Dr. K. V. Puttappa

Unpertubed peace prevailed all over. In the vast expense of the cloud-flecked sky the cool and circular moon, appearing one moment and disappearing the next among the commingling cloudlets, was engaged in the endless game of hide-and-seek. The delightful moonlight itself mingling in mutual intercourse with the confluence of the Ganga and the Jamuna, danced along their frothy waves with conscious pride for it knew that it was irresistibly beautiful! Even the surrounding forests were submerged in its glory. A breeze, cool and comforting slowly and wearily wandered about, kissing this flower or that tender sprout of the forest trees over and over again as though to make sure that its lost love, the one object at its eternal quest, was not hidden therein.

On one of the rocks embedded in the sands Chaitanya sat transfixed, looking into the clear depths of the star-studded and moon-illumined sky. He had just then finished his meditation, and both his mind and heart had doubly attained the wondrous beauty and peace that were in evidence on sky and earth alike. Looking on fascinatedly at the countless twinkling stars, the moon that looked like a veritable lump at love itself, the various groups of clouds that sailed along, like so many bits of thick-laid cream, the dense forests that fringed the rivers, and the grandeur with which they flowed on in each other's affectionate embrace, he would often forget himself in the thought that if this enthralling multitude of external beauty be merely the outer aspect of god, His inner aspect, the aspect of his soul, must perforce

be far more magnificent, sublime, transcendental.

From the objective sphere of thought, gradually and imperceptibly, he came into the speculative and then ultimately into the subjective sphere. The ladder of life he had come climbing up was there, no doubt but in such dilapidated condition that some of the rungs thereof were rustridden, some were bent out of shape and some had fallen off their sockets altogether; hence the pictures that he saw reflected on the retina of his mental eye were not all equally clear or distinct, - while some were glaringly vivid, some were blurred and blotched, and some looked merely like dreams dreamt and forgotten, sometime, some where, long, long ago, yet this retrospective introspection just then had a peculiar charm for him. So without making any attempt to check this tendency of his mind he continued in his reminiscences till he came up to the time of his abandoning hearth and home, two years ago, and wandering about in search of a "Guru" and finding him in Swami Premanand at Prayag whose disciple he became, and accepted "Sanyasa" after being duly initiated thereinto, when someone from behind him said "What, Chaitanya, is there no end at all to your meditation?"

Chaitanya recognizing him by his voice, smilingly turned round and said, "Come, Mukunda!"

"I disturbed you, I fear?"

"So, I was just looking over at the beauties of Creation How very peaceful the night is and how blissful the sight!"

"And why not? Does "Sanyasa" metamorphose one into a granite block?"

'Yoga' means the control of all mental activities, you said yourself.

"The control of mental activities need not, and does not, result in the loss of the faculty of imagination. Mukunda, 'yoga' means union through self purification, - not suicide! Did you not, the other day, listen to Gurujee's interpretations on 'Samatvam yogamuchyate'? Equality, true equality, is yoga; and it is only through self-control and self purification that we could attain it. But you are standing, come, won't you sit down?"

Mukunda complied. Looking up he saw that the sanyasi was beautiful, resplendently beautiful but it did not seem to have been born of flesh and blood alone. His eyes, which seemed bent on piercing (the boundless) eternity itself, had a lightning - like glitter in them. Clad in ochre-coloured garments he looked so mighty and majestic that it was impossible not to think of him as some supernatural being expressly come down to humanize man, to destroy, for ever, the demon in him. Mukunda's heart began to beat furiously fast, and his eyes filled with tears. Quickly turning to one side he wiped them dry with the end of his upper cloth, for he did not choose to let Chaitanya notice that he was moved.

It was customary with devotees in a disturbed state of mind to visit Swami Premanand in his "ashram" and gain tranquility and peace. Mukunda was one of them. It was after about a year and a half of Chaitanya's initiation into sanyasa that he saw him amongst the Swamy's devotees. From that day onwards their liking which was mutual, grew into firm friendship. Many a time since then had he entered into earnest philosophical discussions with Chaitanya and profited by his deep learning. Not that Mukunda's knowledge of the subject was perfunctory, - but the profundities of philosophy are not easily understood. Often too had he spent his time loitering at the river side with him in pure light heartedness - laughing at some witticism, either his own or his companion's, with all the abandonment of a care-free conscience. This is how they had grown to be such chums. That Chaitanya was an uncommon individual Mukunda

knew but too well. That is why, though he did not show it outwardly, his admiration for him was so profound. And Chaitanya too, from the very first day of his arrival, loved him - loved him with a nameless love. His simple frankness had touched him, Chaitanya, to the very core. Even the Swamy himself had a special liking for him. And he spent his time mostly within the ashram itself.

Whenever Chaitanya asked him about his parents and the place of his birth, Mukunda would invariably put him off with "Not today please, I will tell you some other day." So he thought it best to relinquish the idea altogether, for whenever he made any fresh attempts to question him, Mukunda instead of making his hither-to usual reply, would burst out crying like a child.

Every day, in the evening, after listening to the expositions of Gurudev, the congregation of devotees would prostrate in a body at the feet of the great sadhu and retire from the 'ashram'. But Mukunda had acquired the habit of enjoying an evening walk with Chaitanya in the neighboring forests and reaching home only when it grew quite dark. Today, too, Chaitanya, having started to go out into the forests as usual, asked Mukunda if he would not accompany him. Mukunda said that he had something of especial importance to be learnt from Gurudev, and that therefore he would be going there a little later on in the evening. So Chaitanya had gone out all by himself, and, after roaming about here and there from some time, had returned to his seat on the rock by the riverside where, awaiting him, Mukunda was already seated.

For a long time they sat, mute and motionless, there, (in the tranquil might) amidst the white moonlight washed sands. On coursed the mighty rivers with their deep musical murmur. The stars overhead glittered with all their wonted lustrousness. And the moon traversed the skies seemingly with but one thought, that of continuing its endless journey.

At last, Chaitanya broke this long-drawn-out spell of silence: "Mukunda, you are unusually silent today".

"Yes Chaitanya. Some indistinct pain which had hither to been lying dormant at the bottom of my heart, has now suddenly commenced clamoring rebelliously for recognition!"

"What! Even in an atmosphere of such tranquility and beauty? Fie, fie upon you!"

"Nevertheless it is true. Of late even philosophy, which I thought, would save me, is depriving me of my peace of mind most relentlessly."

"Don't say so, Mukunda. Trust in God, and peace everlasting will be yours."

"Chaitanya, my trust in Him is unbounded my love untold, and yet he had vouchsafed me nothing but wretchedness in life! Perplexing doubts beset me day and night, and, attempting to clear them, I get frightfully involved. Can you help me?"

"I will try. By the grace of Gurudev I may succeed."

"You have told me so often that there is but one thing in the world; I want to know the inner meaning of this statement. How could we believe this world, which is filled with thousands of fundamentally different things, to be just one single thing? Tell me, is it not utterly suicidal to man's progress to believe in this paradox?"

"Mukunda, though things seem to be different, fundamentally different as you say, from one another they are but the different aspects of the all-pervading inner force which we call the soul, which again is

the true vital working factor, the unseen undercurrent of all creation, that flows unceasingly every-where and in everything, even in the most insignificant of things that be. And it is this and this alone which the philosopher calls 'Ekameva dwiteeyam' - the one in the many."

"What then is the object of creation?"

"Nothing, Or, if there must need be one, creation alone is the object of creation. There cannot be any other; for God's leela, play, is ever objectless."

"It would be wrong of us then to refrain from acting in consonance with this 'leela' of God, would it not?"

"Yes."

"So then, your 'One in the many' applies not to those of us who are within the folds of this leela'".

"True".

"How then could 'Sanyasa' be consistent with 'leela'?"

"It could be, for that too is a kind of hard 'leela'!"

"You mean that it is merely a difficult endeavor?"

Chaitanya did not reply. He was suddenly thrown into an extremely thoughtful mood. After a while, however, he said, "Mukunda, the mysteries of creation can never be explained by mere words. Only through personal intuition and experience could one gain knowledge of it. This is the teaching of Gurudev."

"Chaitanya it is a charming fullmoon night, does its beauty really

touch your heart?"

"It does. Is not beauty, too, an attribute, a component of God?"

"They say that a sanyasi should never allow his heart to be captivated by beauty."

"Then he must not let his heart be captivated by bliss either. But beauty, to a sanyasi, is always a part of the Almighty Lord Himself; - it can never be to him the pride - fed enjoyment of a wanton egotist! He does not yield to it in self-surrender but identifies himself with it!" "You are not then seated on your own self I hope?"

Chaitanya looked down at the rock he was seated upon, and smiled. "You are satirizing, I see. No, I have not grown insentient enough to be taken for a rock-cut statue yet!"

"You had often asked me to acquaint you with my past; but I had steadily refused".

"Perhaps you had no inclination."

"Why don't you yourself tell me something of your parents, your place, your past?"

"A sanyasi may not speak of his former life, his past 'ashram', with anybody. He must even forget it himself. Such is the injunction.

"So, then shall I tell you about myself?"

"I am curious, I own."

"But I am afraid."

"Of what?"

"Of being censured, nay, spurned by you as a spurious specimen of the human race!"

"Nay. Nay, a sanyasi spurns none. Would he then disdain a friend?"

"A Sanyasi spurns none, you say?"

"Yes, none."

"Truly?"

"Truly. But why do you ask?"

"A woman in love, for instance!?"

Chaitanya remained silent for a while, then, "I have already lived out that state of life," he said.

"I had an interview with Gurudev, earlier in the evening today, before I came here."

"What for?"

"To beg for a boon."

"A boon, from a sanyasi?"

"Yes, from a sanyasi, though."

"Did he grant it?"

"He did. Truly, he is a 'Mahatma'!"

“But what is it after all, - that you too be initiated into ‘sanyasa’?”

“Be it whatsoever, it cannot be consummated unless you too bestow it upon me!”

“Who am I to withhold that which ‘Gurudev’ himself has thought fit to bestow?”

“You do so then, without even knowing what it is’?”

“I do! But what is it?”

II

That day in the evening, when all the usual visitors had gone from the ‘ashram’, Mukunda approached the Swamy and prostrated himself reverentially at his feet.

Conferring his blessing on him the Swamy said :

“Come, Mukunda; are you well?”
“By your grace, I am, ‘Gurudev!”
“Are you going through your daily meditation methodically, without hitch or hindrance?”

“No, Gurudev, I am much perturbed - my heart is lacerated with grief.”
“The reason?”
“I have come to crave your pardon for the wrong I have done, and that deliberately.”

“Tranquilize yourself, Mukunda, it is but human to err.”

“But I am a sinner, Gurudev.”

“What is your sin?”

"I am a hypocrite, a pretender."

"You are not alone a hypocrite or a pretender, Mukunda; the whole world is such! Nay, but know you not that the Lord himself is said to be the 'Kapatanataka Sootradhari', the Director ever-lasting of this endless drama of life?"

"But, 'Gurudev', mine is of quite a different type altogether".

"Tell me what it is then."

Mukunda began to weep, weep spasmodically; - the comforting words that the Swamy tried to soothe him with tending but to increase the intensity of his overwhelming sorrow.

At last, the turbulency of his grief somewhat abating, he raised his tearbedimmed eyes and said, "Gurudev, sorrow, such as mine, cannot be assuaged by mere words."

"Then what is it that you want?"

"A boon, Gurudev."

"What boon ?"

"The fear of a possible refusal keeps me tongue - tied! Gurudev, send me not despairing from your presence, I solicit you, - for then you will be sending me only to my death."

"Have no fear, Mukunda, speak freely."

"Gurudev, six months ago I came here, to your ashram, to seek consolation and peace at your sacred feet. But, though I tried to the utmost of my ability, I failed to achieve my end; for my heart is weak,

cowardly. Today, however, I have come determined to speak out, and obtain from you the final decision of my future you can make or mar it entirely."

The Swamy was looking at Mukunda most benevolently. All on a sudden Mukunda threw away his turban and fell prostrate once again at the feet of his gurudev. But, lo, his hair, parted at the middle, falling luxuriously about the sadhu's feet, he looked very much like a woman!

"What is this Mukunda?" Asked the Swamy quite in his usual peaceful manner, without any sign of surprise or displeasure.

"I am not Mukunda Gurudev, but Ramesha's Indira."

"What relation is Chaitanya to you?"

"Not Chaitanya Gurudev but Ramesha. He is my husband! Gurudev. A few days after our marriage, he disappeared suddenly. My mother-in-law and father-in-law, his parents, died of grief. Not that I hold Ramesha responsible for this, their untimely death. He was always for leading a life of renunciation, the life of an ascetic. Marriage, with all its concomitant worldliness, was ever repulsive to him. Still his parents forced him into it. For they did not want him, their only son, to become a sanyasi, and be lost to them for ever.

But he came away, all the same. My life assumed the aridness of a desert after that. I was looked down upon by everyone about me. In despair I started out, in the guise of a sanyasi, searching for Ramesh at every likely place, until at last I found him, my tutelary deity, here, at the feet of Your Reverence. I have been with him ever since, and have even acquired his friendship. But now he is Chaitanya, the disciple of gurudev, the friend of Mukunda; not the husband of Indira. That he is yet to be. Gurudev, have pity on this unfortunate, this forlorn, Indira. She is beseeching you for the object of her ever

increasing love, her husband, who is also her life; for she had found it utterly impossible to live any longer without him! You are wisdom incarnate; you are great; be gracious, too. and save her, oh, save her!"

"O, my daughter! But does Chaitanya know this?"

"No, Gurudev."

"A sanyasi may not become a 'samsari' a house-holder, again it is highly sinful"

"But can it be more sinful that throwing one's own wife, with a weight attached to her legs down into the seething ocean of sorrow deliberately, without any human compunction? Can ever a crime be more hideous a sin more heinous, than this?"

"More over Chaitanya is strictly ascetic in temperament, - a keen 'vairagi'"

"Ramesha's heart has not turned into stone yet, Gurudev, I know. By your grace, even the worst of impediments, even the most monstrous of sins, could be burnt to ashes. Therefore your sanction alone is all that I want. - and I entreat you, I implore you in all devoutness, to grant me this boon."

"My daughter, do not think that I am a stone myself. You have not only my sanction but my benediction too. Go, win him if you can by your own endeavour. Why shall I seek to wreck the one sweet dream of your life? When it is shattered to pieces of its own accord, you shall return to me, both of you. Real or illusory sweetness is always sweetness.

When, having woken up from your dream you find it a mirage that had led you astray, then and then only will it be possible for you to really

and totally renounce illusion and follow truth. Therefore, go, my daughter and exert yourself to attain your object.

Indira, overflowing with gratitude, silently took the dust of the noble Swamy's feet and, after picking up and re-tying the turban over her head, so as to hide her tresses completely, quietly walked out of the 'ashram.' The Swamy sat merged in thoughts, the thought of the world with its never-ending illusions.

III

"But, Mukunda, whatever is this boon of yours that you say cannot be consummated unless I too 'bestow' it upon you? You mystify me!"

"I will tell you; but, Chaitanya, you have already bestowed it upon me, - be pleased to remember that ?"

"I do remember, but what is it?"

"It is you, my Ramesha, my husband, that I want!"

With which Mukunda transformed himself in a moment into the suppliant Indira and stood before him. Quite taken a back, Chaitanya, too, stood up, and stared at the individual standing bathed in the moonlight on the shimmering sands. As he stared Mukunda went further and further away, receding step by step, until at last he disappeared totally from the horizon of his mind and got identified with the infinite. Instead he saw Indira approaching him, hazy and undefined at first, but gradually becoming terribly clear and distinct. In that bright moonlight, in that profound stillness of the night, there, on the gleaming silvery sands, where the great rivers, Ganga and the Jamuna, flowed in unison, Chaitanya looked fixedly at Indira - looked at her as the impalpable looking at the palpable, the infinite looking at the finite. Time, that inexorable recorder of all that happens, stopped fascinated in its irrevocable course. The moon, the stars, the rivers, the entire universe itself stopped as it were, wondering

apprehensively what would happen next.

After a while Indira beaming with love, said : “Ramesha!”

“Mukunda, I am not Ramesha, but Chaitanya!”

“Ramesha I, too, am not Mukunda, but Indira, your own Indira, reduced now to a state of beggarliness, - for I have come to supplicate you for the consummation of the boon bestowed. And forget not that you have pledged yourself, unconditionally and of your own accord, to implement it!”

“I never forget the word accorded, not draw back from it. But let Mukunda come forward!”

“Ramesha, do you really love me?”

“Yes, Mukunda is Chaitanya’s most intimate friend.”

“Ramesha, yearning for a sight of you, for over a year have I wandered ceaselessly from place to place, without rest, without sleep, often without even sup or fare. Once my people wanted to take you back by force, but I stopped them!”

“They were for dragging Chaitanya alive to the crematory! Well Chaitanya is thankful to Mukunda for his intercession!”

“When the whole universe itself is trembling with the desire for union, it is not meet that Ramesha should endeavour, like a miser, to keep aloof. Let this sacred place which marks the confluence of the Ganga and the Jamuna, mark, and invest with sanctity, the union of Ramesha and Indira too !”

“I am ready; Death King of terrors though he be, cannot intimidate me. If Mukunda desires, Chaitanya will not even for a moment

hesitate to jump with him into the river."

"Whatever do you mean Ramesha! Surely you do not suppose that I contemplate committing suicide, do you?"

"What else then?" Chaitanya has never yet thought Mukunda to be separate from him. In future, too, he will not think so."

"But I am your wedded wife!"

"You are my bosom friend!"

"Had you not then loved Indira?"{

"No, but I love Mukunda!"

"Ramesha, Gurudev had vouchsafed me not only his sanction but also his benediciton."

"Really? oh, how formidable to believe!"

"Yet it is true; may the dust of his exalted feet forever be the mark of wifehood on my forehead! But if you, my Ramesha, cannot think it possible to accept me I will end my life by precipitating myself into the river here, having nothing further to live for."

"Then I, too, will have to end mine much in the same fashion!"

"Look at this moonlit night, Ramesha! Is it not charming?"

"Yes, Mukunda; it is profoundly peaceful."

"But I am only a woman - weak and feeble, both of mind and body!"

"Mukunda should not say so, for he is neither the one not the other."

"Refuse me not, Ramesha, I beg you, oh, humbly, humbly do I beg you! Let the magic of your love convert this desert into a flower-garden. I have not in me even a fraction of your chivalry, your heroism. I am but a weakling - incapable, incapable of living without you; for I love you, my Ramesha, love you with all my heart, with all my soul, - love you as no woman ever loved man yet. Oh, my husband! Be merciful, and save me, save me from utter ruination!".

While Indira sobbed heart-renderingly clasping his feet in entreaty, Chaitanya, with his hands crossed over his manly chest stood staring vacantly. Indira excepted, everything about him disappeared from his view. The moon, the stars, the sky, the rivers, the forest, - all, all, like so many dream - born phantoms, quivered before his eyes for a while and then vanished totally into oblivion. The whole universe became black to him in a moment. As though stricken with horror at the sight of this his mental phenomenon, he cried out : 'Gurudev! Gurudev!"

Immediately he thought he heard some one from behind him say, "What is it, Chaitanya?"

He turned round and saw Swamy Premananda approaching him with all the serenity, beauty and dignity of a divine being.

"What is it, Chaitanya?" He asked smilingly, looking the while calmly at Indira who lay huddled up at the feet of Chaitanya like a creeper wrenched out of its support, and at Chaitanya himself, who stood like a veritable mountain of manliness that no storm could ever shake or stir!.

Bowing reverentially to him Chaitanya, his voice grown (slightly) tremulous with sorrow said : "Gurudev!"

"Chaitanya this is the unsolved riddle of the universe - the secret of creation, when one is free, another is in bondage! When one thing becomes tangible, another remains intangible. The truth of today becomes the myth of tomorrow! This is 'maya' the inscrutable 'leela' of God!"

"Gurudev, whatever shall I do next!"

"You are strong, I have seen, and you are free. You have my sanction to do just as you please? The free, in order to be really free, must set those in bondage also free. But whatever you do you will be yourself, for nothing can pollute you. Only, if you refuse to accept Indira her life will become worthless!"

With this the Swamy slowly walked away. Chaitanya looked at Indira now lying mute and motionless at his feet. Raising her up tenderly he said : "Come, Indira, let us get going."

Once again the rivers began to wend their sea ward way, - making music as they went, the moon shone with redoubled brightness; the start twinkled in merriment; and time, thinking perhaps it had tarried too long, bounded forward on its endless course, at double - quick time!

In joy and happiness unbounded Indira clasped, Ramesha to her heart and said : "My noble Ramesha, you are indeed a true Sanyasin."

Tears, precious as pearls of pristine purity, gleaming and fell glittering down from Ramesha's eyes."

K. V. Putappa
Tr. by Krishnaiah

THE LORD OF LORDS OF MANY TITLES (PLAY)

Samsa Tr. by Sandhya. S

(Sutradhara enters at the end of the prologue)

Sutradhara: (Folds hands and bows before the audience)

The stars that shine, thinking
Glory, strength, mastery, generosity and excellence
Are their own
Are unsteady before the moon, like a glow appearing.
In a way that surprises even illusions
But they too exalt the glorious and efficient ruler
Let him give us inexhaustible triumph and happiness

Mysore the daughter of mountains
was taken by the brave king
Ruling from the capital of Yadavas,
The lord of praise singers
Whose efforts turned it into
Mahishoorapura, to exalt its splendor

{scene: The entrance of Nanjundeswara temple at Nanjangood}

(Four or five decorated holy cars, Buntings and festoons: decorated arenas for games and sports; people from different lands and provinces, castes and colours, tribes and lands, and dialects and languages dressed according to their tradition and customs for the

car festival. The din of the fair and shanty. Every now and then a landlord or a duke or a king or some such royal persons in their respective palanquins or on horseback or in howdahs. They get down at the corner of the street; leave behind their respective musical instruments, and all their titles and honors and walk up to the presence of the deity in a humble manner. The tents made of rugs or sacks or sarees or bed sheets flap whenever the wind blows. In one such tent, white in colour the merchant is not found. But there are heaps of parched Bengal gram, loads of copra and bags of sugar; Ballappa and Bore are Keeping vigil over them.)

(A sudden shriek heard from the west disturbs the atmosphere)

A man from the Fair : (Looking in that direction) Something is coming this way- a band of some dacoits or rebels, invaders or king's own men-something! (Runs away)

Those who are armed: (check around their waists if their sword are safe in the sheaths)

(People in the fair, business men busily safegarding their wares, Others run inside the temple, looking back now and then.)

The watchmen of the temple: (Come out and look around,. They run back and shut the main gates. Clincking the metal chains)

Bore: It looks like Appanna will be dragged back here.

Ballappa: (Laughs) Yes. But he is not the one to give in wherever he is dragged or however he is treated.

Bore: At dawn I saw the Maharaja at the pond. How is it he has not come here yet? I am getting some strange thoughts

Ballappa: Let him come still late, younger brother. We'll show him what kind of people Appanna and we are.

Bore: Haan. That's right.

(Enter the hesitating crowd)

Ballappa: What pushing and jostling , little brother! Hey you, go from that side!

(Ballappa and Bore try very hard to safeguard the sacks and heaps of Bengal gram from the crowd and their feet)

(Enter Nanjasetti arrested by enemies. Also enter the retinue of palegaras)

Ballappa: (laughs) What man, you, from the setty-caste, you, too, have become a shepherd to this herd.

Nanjasetty: Yes, brother, yes! shoulden't I lead these poor creatures to the lord's fold?

Enemies: (Become enraged)

Palegara : (comes forward, gesticulates) That's enough!

All: (Quit)

Palegara: Let go of him. But where was it that he insulted us—?

Enemies: There.

Near the groundnut heap
Behind the cash box
Yes, there, on that platform

Inside that tent

Palegara: Take him to that spot. Let him stand there.

Nanjasetty: (Smiles undauntedly and sits in his usual place)

Palegara: Hum...Now, make him apologise for his extreme audacity. Make him write that with his nose on his heap of pulses of Mysore grams; shave off his head on this very hot afternoon. Make the same barber write all the titles that he said his Maharaja alone deserved on his just shaven head with freshly burnt lime. In order to remind him that this man of Mysore will teach a lesson to all helpless heroes of the enemies by cutting off their noses hurling insults at them, laughing at them and in order r to show him that we have not forgotten this, let this shetty's nose be cut-off; in that great plight, let t us chase him away like a dog with the speed of a galloping horse till we make him touch the gate of the fence around Mysore.

Everybody: (puts on an expression of joy)

Ballappa : If only my wife were here to watch this out-door drama she would laugh her guts out, brother. (Laughs)

Nanjasetty : (Winks, nods)

Bore : (Looks serious)

Palegara : Will you admit your rude and rash mistakes or will you not ?

Nanjasetty : What's this brother! Just now you choked your breath reading out the details of the punishment. You ask me if I would confess my crime now! What justice! What goodness! What sense of duty! What enquiry is this! But you have yourselves betrayed the fact that you do not belong to Mysore.

Enemies : (Growl with fury)

Palegara : All right. Let everything take place just as it was decided. Where are you from ?

Ballappa : Look at my palm, brother. None of you can ever forget this. Where am I from ? I am Appanna from Mysore.
A knight of the enemy camp : That's a village of buffaloes.

Nanjasetty : That buffalo was your grandfather. The great Mother, who destroyed it and retained her pride so that the whole land worship her, is the deity of our clan.

The knight : (Tries to thrust his little dagger swiftly at Nanjasetty chest)

Nanjasetty : (Holds the knight's hand along with the dagger with lightning speed. Stands up. Twists the arms behind his back, makes the weapon fall to the ground, pushes and makes him fall on his face.)

Ballappa : (Laughing) Dear brother, don't you aim the arrow at the thunderbolt, you understand!

Enemies : (Indignant, pull out their swords)

Nanjasetty : What I told you was a myth of the past, brother. Our town is not called Mysore anymore. Now that it has become the capital of the Maharaja, it is known as Maheeshoorapma.

Another knight : It seems dogs and cats there, snakes and lizards, insects and worms are all brave warriors!

Nanjasetty : You may find out for yourselves, brothers!

Second Knight : If the village headman who rules that land of such brave men wants to come here, to Nanjangood to worship the deity, on the way, in order to pass this land of only one gavuda they have to take permit and license from the two petty kings. Isn't that so?

Nanjasetty : That was long long ago, brother.
Palegara : Now, what's your name ?

Nanjasetty : I am the subject of his excellency Mahaswamy Thimmaraja Wodeya the second, the lord of the throne of the great land of Srimanmaheeshooru, the lord of many titles, Birudanthembara Ganda.

Palegara : (Knits his eyebrows) Is that your name?

Nanjasetty : I am sure I spoke simple Kannada.

Enemies : (Become wild; wield their weapons)

Bore : No, no. He is our Appanna. He is Nanjasetty. Nanjasetty who trades in pulses.

Ballappa : Ela ! Silence ! Shut up! (Suddenly turns towards palegaras) That's the only name of all those who belong to Mysore Maheeshoorapura.

Palegara : Which is that 'only name'?

Ballappa : (Stands erect. Touches the hilt of the sword to his forehead, holds it high, and loudly -) That each one is the proud subject of His Excellency Mahaswamy Thimmaraja Wodeya the second, the lord of the throne of the great land of Maheeshooru, Birudanthembara Ganda.

Palegara : Is that how your parents named you?

Nanjasetty : Our parents, like the other parents of the town, were insane and without understanding. They have been putting us into trouble by giving us various names for mischief or for their own convenience.

Another Palegara : What's happening ? Why do you discuss so much with these worms as if they were your equals, instead of stamping upon them with the left foot ?

Nanjasetty : (Drawing out his dagger) Yes, we too are surprised about it.

A man from the fair : These three, who are not helpless, may not be a match for you, but they have behind them as guardians the dynasty of the Maharaja of Mahisooru and his seven - fold army, ready and equipped. Do not forget this. You don't seem to have forgotten it.

All : (Quiet)

The man from the fair : The whole world knows that the others are seeing with jealousy seeing three to four hundred accountants of the King of Mysore, becoming more famous because of his prosperity, strength, grandeur and fame, because of the band of bodyguards that increase every instant, and the ways in which his army is getting ready.

Warriors on the enemy side : (Stare at the weapons in their hands, the man from the fair and the palegaras, one by one)

Ballappa : Sir, Why do you want to get involved in this dispute between kings ? Go your way.

Nanjasetty : The lord of Mahishoora does not live by your opinion or greetings, encouragement or consent, or even words of praise. Get going!

A knight : He too must be a citizen of the buffallo - village !

The man from the fair : No. Aigooru is our town. Keep in mind that all these kings of yours will be doomed to infam as long as the sun and moon last, if only injustice, treachery, evil raise their heads in this great meet of the travellers coming from fifty six countries.

Another knight : That baldy should be caught hold of. His limbs and head should be plucked out and he should be hanged like bunting at the gate of this fort facing Mysore.

Yet another knight : Yes. What drivelling !

Yet another : Who brought him here ? Tell me.

Palegara : Do you still proclaim in trance that elaborate title still belongs to the lord of your town ?

Nanjasetty : What else ?

Ballappa : (Laughing) yes.

Palegara : What is that title ?

Nanjasetty : The hero with a fierce heart, who dares hearing the title of our Maharaja must have a title himself, otherwise we are told strictly to neglect those who scream or shrieve with such question and to be quiet.

Palegara : We too have titles !

Nanjasetty : (Grinning) Then, let's hear them.

Praise singers of the palegara : (Folding hands)

Glory to the bravest of warriors sporting with victory and splendour!
The intrepid young hero!
The lion to the elephant of the enemy king!
The matchless hero!
The protector of the surrendered ones
The one full of knowledge of literary art!
Unexcelled in sixty four fine arts!
The glorious one like the sun
The Raja of Maharajas.

Nanjasetty : Is that all ?

All : (Quiet)

Nanjasety : (In a serious tone) There can be only one such lord - His Excellency Mahaswamy Thimmaraja Wodeya the second who is the lord of the holy city of Srimanmaheeshoorapura. The lord of titles, like the footprints of an elephant that can hide several footprints; like the great ocean that can accommodate several rivers; the lord who can refuse the confusion of too many small titles, the lord of those who boast of having gobbled up millions of titles - the lord of all titles. Such a great title shall not fit anyone else except the dynasty of the Maharaja of Srimanmaheeshooru.

Ballappa : Yes ! Yes!

Nanjasetty : Anybody else with titles brothers, show me mercy by asking me to repeat them.

2nd Palegara : (Stares with neglect at the first palegara and his men, looks at his own men, drawing out his sword)

Praise singers of the 2nd palegara :

Glory to the supreme lord of the treasure of seven seas!
The sun to the garden of blue lotuses of kings of many lands!
The one glorying in the lion's roar penetrating the hearts of enemy kings.
The one on whose forehead Brahama has inscribed:
The valiant and noble lord of the earth!
The diamond among valiant ones!
The observer of true piety, morality and good conduct!
The expert in the highest erotic art!
Beautiful with good features and parts like Manmatha!
The lord of the lords of many titles!

Nanjasetty : Lord of the lords of many titles, is that what you said? That is Mahaswamy sri Thimmaraja Wodeya the second who is the lord of the throne of Srimanmaheeshooru. (Playfully bends down, picks up the bushel from the heap of pulses with the left hand; begins to drum the bottom of the bushel with the dagger in his right hand and sings to its rhythm in a hoarse voice) Anthembara Ganda - That's Thimmaraja Wodeya of Srimammaheeshooru. Birudanthembara Ganda Thimmaraja Wodeya of Srimanmaheeshooru.

Ballappa : (His face blooms like a flower; he begins to tap a rhythm on his left hand from the hilt of his sword, and joined in praise singing)

Nanjasetty and Ballappa : Your title is the lord of all this and all that ! The lord of all titles, Birudanthembara Ganda, Thimmaraja Wodeyar the second! How! Anthembara Ganda, His Excellency Mahaswamy Sri Thimmaraja Wodeya the second of Srimanmaheeshooru. (They repeat this several times)

113 Palegaras, their men and knights turn wild. Taking out their weapons, they rush towards Nanjasetty and Ballappa)

The others : (Many of them run away. Some of them stand at a distance, watching. A few others keep ready their weapons and take palegaras side or go to rescue the unarmed women, children and old people)

Nanjasetty : (Throws the dagger and the bushel on the heap of the pulse, snatches two swords from the hands of two men of the enemy side with lightning speed, and, holding them in either hand, turns them like they do in sword fight.)

Ballappa and Bore : (Throw away bows and arrows. Holding the hilt of the sword in both hands, they take to sword fight)

Enemies : (Surround those heroes of Maheeshooru, and begin to move forward, backward, to the left and to the right, depending on how the heroes deal with them. Sometimes going forward, teasing, cursing, accusing, crying out aloud. With the desire to somehow penetrate the pattern made out of weapons, and with spears resplendent and flying in great speed, some are fighting very hard. Some people somehow caught in the chaos call out helplessly and fall down)

Outside : (Sounds of fight and medley.)

(Some armed soldiers, beaming with weapons dripping with blood, rush in, led by the commander of Maheeshooru army.)

The Maheeshooru Army : (In a wink, attack the enemies and disarm them)

(Enter His Excellency Thimmaraja Wodeya the Second, followed by his retinue)

(The Maheeshooru army give him a royal salute)

Those who cam in : (Lean on heir bloody weapons, and watch with surprise the tricks and fighting skills)

Nanjasetty, Ballappa, Bore : (Stop their exploits. Fold hands along with swords in hand and bow down)

[Silence for a while]

Maharaja : What's this?

Ballappa : We are the watchmen of the palace in this town that belongs to the lord.

Maharaja : Who are those 'we'?

Ballappa : This Bore here, and me, Maswamy.

Maharaja : You here ? At this time ?

Ballappa : There lords, palegaras ...., all there here, were lauding themselves by taking thousands of titles upon themselves including Anthembara Ganda - Birudanthembara Ganda, Maswamy. It did not agree with us. We could not bear that. We tried to stop them saying such titles belong only to the lord and not to curs. Then as a result, all these ....)Looks around)

Maharaja : Who is that?

Bore : He is our Appanna ! Maswamy.

Maharaja : Appanna! Where are you from?

Nanjasetty : Maheeshoorapura is my home, Mahaswamy.

Maharaja : Maheeshoorapura!

Nanjasetty : Mahaswamy, I am the subject of Birudanthembara Ganda, the great king Sri Thimmaraja Wodeyar the second who is the lord of the ciry of Srimanmaheeshooru.

Maharaja : (Delighted) Yes. What were you doing here?

Nanjasetty : (Pointing with his finger) I trade in pulses, Mahaswamy.

Maharaja : So, are you not Nanjasetty then?

Nanjasetty : (Lets fall the swords in hand, bows and folds hands)

Maharaja : Then, what does Appanna man?

Bore : (Joyfully) yes, Maswamy, he is our Appanna.

Nanjasetty : (Blushes, bends the head)

Ballappa : (Laughs) Maswamy, his father named him Nanjasetty but called him 'Appanna' out of love. All of us call him 'Appanna' 'Appanna' at home, now, Maswamy.

Maharaja : Appanna, no name in itself has any worth. The name acquires special values thanks to the virtues of the person who adorns the name. Only then does it become a subject of gratitude or denunciation on the part of the people. (Smiling) For instance, from this moment, 'Appanna' the name of endearment used by those old people takes on the adjective of 'Maheeshooru Birudanthembara Ganda"

Nanjasetty : To me! That title! Mahaswamy! Shantam papam! Shantam papam! Shantam papam! Sorry, sorry.

Maharaja : (Laughing) Hasty Appanna, that title, Anthu-Inthu-Embara Ganda, Birudanthembara Ganda, is a title befitting only the lord of the throne of Maheeshooru; a title without a second one; it suits Appanna, it suits each citizen having the virtue of valor and patriotism. The lord of those who can teasingly ask the people of Maheeshooru : What's there in a title : Birudu Enthu ? It's known as Maheeshoora Birudanthembara Ganda.

Nanjasetty : Mahaswamy, I feel gratified.
(Bows with folded hands)

Maharaja : Let those two brave soldiers become the chief horsemen among our bodyguards.

Commander : Yes Mahaswamy

Ballappa & Bore : (Give a royal salute)

Outside : (Sounds of royal trumpet)
(A Maheeshooru soldier enters)

The soldier who came in : (Gives a royal salute, whispers the message to the commander and depart, with royal salute)

Commander : Mahaswamy, the lord of Ummathoosu is on one of his usual visits to the fair.

Maharaja : (Nods)

(The players of royal instruments, the drummers, the courtesans

bearing mirrors and water filled auspicious pots, the royal emblems like the umbrella, fan and daytime torch, the rows of flags emblazoned with the sun, moon, bull, trident, etc., Shiva - worshippers carrying bamboo arches, groups of Brahmins holding each other's hands and chanting vedic mantras, religious authorities of Ummathooru province - along with these splendours enter a silver palanquin adorned with six golden holy pots and veils of Chinese silk, meticulously guarded by the famous wrestlers and soldiers of Ummathooru.)

Maheeshooru Soldiers : (Look up to the Commander)

Commander : (Watches unblinkingly)

Nanjasetty : What's this, brother?

A citizen of Ummathuru : The great provincial head famous for hunting elephants, observing singlemindedly the promotion of the vedas and scriptures, the best of those abiding by the path of Varnashrama Dharma, the greatest devotee of Shiva, Lord Basaveswara re-incarnate, belonging to the sun dynasty and adorned with numberless titles like Penugonda chakreshwara Sri Ummathooru Sri Mallaraja Wodeyar, the great hero pays his annual respect to lord Nanjundeswara Swamy of Nanjangoodu, nick named the Kailasa of the South by offering wealth & grains, lamp worship, offering Naivedya, daily worship, fortnightly worship, monthly worship, yearly worship, the great car worship etc.

Nanjasetty : If not five, should there not be seven. Why only six?

Citizen : (Laughs) You mean the holy pots ? Yes, we virtuous people who follow Shivachara do not agree with the numbers and symbols of you brahmins. The six pots agree with the sacred letters of the mantra, "Om - Na - Mah - Shi - Va - Ya"

Nanjasetty : Why all this din and buzzle while paying God his dues ? Hum, get going. (Waves his hand)

Citizen : (Looks round at his men with anger; jerks his head and follows the palanquin)

(Enter another palanquin, of Ummathooru palace with five holy pots just like the previous one, along with women folk or Gowdithies, praise singers, attendants and riches)

The bearers : (put down the palanquin and stand aside)

A Gowdithi : (Pulls aside the red velvel veil of the palanquin)

Madevammani : (Comes down from the palanquin)

All : (Put their heads down)

Gowdithies : (Surround her and arrange her dress and ornaments)

Another Gowdithi : (Places in Madevammanni's left hand a golden plate filled with turmeric, vermilion, sandal paste, flowers, beetle leaf, arecanut, fruits and sacred grain or rice, and gives to other women plates and vessels consisting of accompaniments of worship like holy pot, mirror etc. and carries one such plate herself.)

Madevammanni : (Seeing the people and palegaras, pulls up the end of her saree over her pearl studded hairknot, and turns to go)

Praise singers : (Stand, lift their arm)

Ho! Ho! Listen attentively!
Glory to the great lord of provinces!

The hunter of elephants!
The destroyer of the death - god!
The terrible warrior!
The lord of three kings - Chera, Chola and Pandya!
The master of the rulers of Neelagiri!
The lord of Sourashtrapura, the best of cities!
The great lord of the kingdom of Hoyisana!
The great king!
The most valiant one!
Sri Mallaraja Wodeya, the lord!

Nanjasetty : Victory to his Excellency Anthembara Ganda Sri Thimmaraja Wodeyar the second, the lord of Srimanmaheeshooru.

Madevammani : (Stops suddenly like a puppet, gets back, stares at Nanjasetty from crown to sole) Is this the one who groaned?

Jaggayyanayaka : Yes, mother.

Madevammanni : Cut off his tongue, now, this minute, and let vultures and dogs feast on it!

Jaggayyanayaka : Mother!

Madevammanni : (Arrogantly) Hum, go ahead!

Jaggayyanayaka : (Bows to her) Yes, mother. (With sword in hand, he goes towards Nanjasetty)

Commander : (Leaps suddenly, holds the bloody sword in Jaggayyanayaka's way, smiles) which way are you going, brave commander ?

Jaggayyanayaka : On an invasion to teach this vast world that no

misadventure can go unpunished for a moment which mocks or debases the majestic supremacy the royal power, the ebullience and matchless valour of Ummathooru by wreaking vengeance on his tongue that doubted the honor and sovereignty of Sri Mallaraja Wodeyar honoured with titles like the great lord of provinces.

Nanjasetty : (Guffaws, clapping his hands)

Citizens of Ummathooru : (Turn wild instantly, and grind teeth)
Jaggayyanayaka : (Trying to put aside the sword from the sheath) let me go!

Commander : Let this strength of vengeance be first looked into by armed men of valour before we come to blows, O brave commander.

Madevammanni : (With reddened face, glowing eyes and in a tough voice) Jaggayyanayaka, let them know that the queen's harem of Ummathooru palace is in no way inferior to the courage and valour of beasts naming and masking themselves as resplendent men at the court of Mysore.

Maharaja : Calm down. Such excitement and eloquence will not exalt the prestige of any palace.

Madevammanni : (Cinder - eyed, throwing down the golden plate), rushing forward, bending down, lifting up a sword, she stands right in front of the Maharaja, she gesticulates with war-like decorum, retreats a little, stands up and gives out a grunt.

All : (Still)

Madevammanni : On seeing the sword in a woman's hand, did the arrogant blood of Mysore turn cold like ditch water and go subterranean to hide itself?

Maharaja : (Smiles) That's right, mother. (Slides the sword in hand into its sheath tied to his waist band)

Jaggayyanayaka : (Gets back)

Madevammanni : (Wildly lifts up a sword towards Maharaja's head)

All : (Give cut a cry of surprise)
Commander; Soldiers and Nanjasetty : (Push towards Madevammanni)

Maharaja : (Gestures with his eyes so as to order them into retreat)

Warriors of Ummathooru and Jatties : (Get ready for the battle)

Jaggayyanayaka and Gowdithies : (Take position on either side of and behind Madevammanni) Mother, this is His Excellency! His Excellency! His Excellency!

Madevammanni : (Mocking) Are you are are you not willing to fight at least now?

Maharaja : (Folds hands on his chest, bows his head and stands still)

Madevammanni : (Traces the sharp point of the sword round Maharaja's face and shoulders, and pushes down his headgear with it! (Laughing with contempt,) what strength and valour! What great supremacy! What self respect! You coward! Birudanthembara Ganda of a strange species! (Instantly turns her back on the Maharaja)

The soldiers of Maheeshooru : (Downcast, tightening their jaws, red eyed, they fix their gaze on the Commander)

Commander : O you, the Commander of Ummathooru, the lord of the

throne of Srimanmaheeshooru, the Mahaswamy, is looking forward to apologies from your king Sri Veeramallaraja Wodeyar for this excess and mockery!

Madevammanni : Aha! What a bold one! If this boastful beast of a buffalo had the might to obtain such a strange apology that you mumble for, (pointing with the thumb extended from the first at her back) let it acquire humanity and boldness.

Nanjasetty : So The title of the bold one becomes worthy when attached to the dynasty of Maharaja of Srimanmaheeshooru.

Madevammanni : (Laughs sarcastically) The boon bestowed by a helpless one - a woman.

Nanjasetty : Gem found in a dung heap, what is it but a gem ?

Commander : Silence!

Nanjasetty : (Perplexed)

Madevammanni : Jaggayyanayaka, why do you stand listening to these she-buffaloes of Mysore instead of slaughtering them ?

Jaggayyanayaka : Mother. His Excellency is about to come here.

Madevammanni · Is our command not sufficient ?

Jaggayyanayaka : Mother!

Madevammanni : It is hard to know if you are blind or rebellious. Did it not occur to you that the moment we attack these people, those two brave kings will come attacking us?

People of Maheeshooru : (Smile gently)

Jaggayyanayaka : Mother, it is not good to do anything in haste, without looking before and after. Please listen......

Madevammanni : (Takes a few steps forward, looks around puckers her brows) Were this our kind and supporters grazing grass while such a huge army of the Mahisoor man, equipped in every way, gathered and sojourned in this holy place ?

Jaggayyanayaka : Mother, no body will be benefited in any way by such merciless accusation. We should not forget the fact that the kings of Mysore never came this way without special retinue and soldiers armed to teeth.

Madevammanni : Coward ! (Throws away the sword; wild with rage and tears in eyes, she holds her chest) If only I were born a man! Ayyo!

Maharaja : That's our misfortune, Ammayya - And, with this exclamation of sorrow, you have put to shame Sri Veeramallaraja Wodeyar, your brave husband, the best of warriors.

Madevammanni : (Shudders) Ayyo!

Outside : (A loud roar is heard)

(Enter Sri Veera Mallaraja Wodeyar, armed, covered in dust and sweat of long journey; he has sword and sheath in hand, and is slightly gasping)

Commander : (Signals for his men who have come pursuing Mallaraja to get back)

People of Ummathooru : (Bow down to Mallaraja in appropriate ways)

Mallaraja : (Looks around, stops at Jaggayyanayaka) What happened?
(Jaggayyanayaka comes closer, whispers in his ear, shading his mouth with the palm of his hand)

(Mallaraja turns pale, turns to Maharaja)
Maharaja : (Beaming) Are you well, Mallaraja? Come.
(Mallaraja and Maharaja walk a few steps towards each other and embrace)

All from Ummathooru and Maheeshooru : (Bow down with folded hands)

Mallaraja : (Smiling) I am at a loss to know how I should behave here. You must be my guide.

Maharaja : (Sadly) Mallaraja, you alone must lift up this headgear with your own hands and put it on our head.

Mallaraja : We?

Maharaja : Yes.

Mallaraja : (Draws out his weapon and takes the stance of a sword fighter)

Maharaja : (Takes a sword with his out stretched hands from a soldier standing nearby; breaks the pointed end of it by stamping on it; looks at the remaining part as if testing, and, proceeds toward, Mallaraja)
(Mallaraja and Maharaja engage in a duel with sword)

Maharaja : (Presses the pointed end of his sword against Mallaraja who is unarmed; makes him retreat. Throwing away the weapon, he returns, wipes his forehead with the end of the scarf)

Attendants : (Attends on Maharaja)

(Mallaraja lifts the headgear of Maharaja; holding it in both hands, he brings it to the Commander and hands it over; he walks back and stands among other palegaras.)

(Maharaja wears the headgear given by the commander)

People of Maheeshooru : (Bow down with folded hands)

Maharaja : Though you are going to take over his elephants, horses and palanquins, in keeping with the custom, restore to him those possessions necessary for his honour and prestige.

Commander : I understand, Mahaswamy.

Maharaja : Let him pay to the palace of Maheeshooru one fourth of all the income of the dukedom of Ummathooru and a half of the land, wealth and grains recovered after waging wars on others so that today's embarrassment does not recur to disturb us.

Madevammanni : (With acute pain) Ayyo!

Commander : Yes, Mahaswamy.

Maharaja : Let our accountants be vigilant so that no other forms of income are included in this military tribute.

Commander : Yes, Mahaswamy.

Maharaja : Draft an agreement to that effect and get the signatures and royal seals of all these village heads, lords and dukes alike, and show it to us.

Commander : Yes, Mahaswamy.

Maharaja : And, as usual, let these two be our honoured guests in our palace till the end of the feast following the car festival tomorrow.

Commander : Yes, Mahaswamy.

Maharaja : Now, let those two come here. Siddarajayya of Hunasanal and Rajayya Arasu, the ruler of Sinduvalli. Though you two were appointed feudatories by us, you were not content with our royal seal and enjoying our protection. Time and again you teamed up with our foes sharpening your swords against us, and tried to betray us - a fact we deeply regret. Especially you, Rajayya Arasu. Are you not ashamed to behave wickedly inspite of being our brother's kinsman and to inflict misery on your daughter and bring regret, sorrow and insult to the whole of Maheeshooru kingdom ?

Siddarajayya : Mahaswamy, we were caught by chance in the company of these treacherous lords..

Maharaja : Enough! Let these two be present in court on the day after tomorrow.

Commander : Yes, Mahaswamy

Maharaja : Appanna, come here.

Nanjasetty : Yes, Mahaswamy.

Maharaja : You have committed the great crime of throwing a challenge of valour to the harem, unprotected by a brave man and inflicted on all of us in the kingdom of Maheeshooru an unprecedented kind of shame and defeat. As a result of this, the glory, renown and loftiness of Maheeshooru has become tarred, and degenerated into a disgusting by-word.

Nanjasetty : (Down cast, Softly) Yes, Mahaswamy.

Maharaja : Our military law lays down that such a traitor who brings defeat of a low kind to us must be tied to a pole on a hot summer afternoon in a wild forest where there is no water, no shade, he should be shot at incessantly with sharp arrows by twenty archers unseen by him. Such is the punishment meted out by our military laws. Yours was a great sin in the realm of the heroic code.

All : (Put down their heads. Silent)

Maharaja : Let the punishment for your blind and misleading patriotism, devotion to kind and excessive pride of citizenship be carried out here and now, at the feet of this gem of a woman.

Nanjasetty : Mahaswamy!

Maharaja : Appanna, do not forget that you are the Birudanthembara Ganda of Maheeshooru, and that this Birudanthembara Ganda is the favourite subject of Maharaja.

Nanjasetty : Yes, Mahaswamy

(Hurries to Madevammanni, sits folding his knees in front of her, slaps his cheeks with his own hands; holding his own ears; does several sit-ups; tiring out, rolls his face in mud; comes up on his knees. Gathers dust at her feet, and slowly, very slowly lifting his

hands above his head, pours the dust over his head. Looks at her humbly. With a faint voice,) Forgive me, mother, forgive me.

Madevammanni : (With tears) Hoaa! Parameswara! (Turns and goes away)
(Gowdithies follow her like her shadows)

Maharaja : (Goes slowly to Nanjasetty, lifts him up) Why, Appanna?

Nanjasetty : (Wiping his tears) Mahaswamy, I am swelling with joy because I got a precious opportunity to show all these people, through this penance, in the gracious presence of Mahaswamy, the degree of heroic fidelity the citizens of Maheeshoorapura have.

Maharaja : Great ! Yes, Mysore has become Maheeshoorupura. The title of Birudanthembara Ganda is not confirmed. But ...

Nanjasetty : In my opinion, we should not give up the title of 'the bold one' given, all by themselves, by the people of Ummathooru King, for it suits the royalty of Mahishooru as long as the sun and moon last.

Maharaja : (Smiles) All right. The title 'the bold one' belongs to us from now. But, the noblest of setties, we are not satisfied by any of these titles. We desire strongly for yet another title.

Nanjasetty : Mother Sri Chamundambike has blessed Mahaswamy with bravery, generosity, splendour, wealth, essence, energy, means and skills to take up, earn, win or confirm any title, Mahaswamy.

Maharaja : (Folding his hands, bending down his body) Yes, but such titles are not among the ones desired by us. We do not want the new title to be handed down to our descendants. It should be ours, my own individual title, applicable only to me. That title is the good name of this brave hero who loves his country, King and countrymen, who

embodies heroic values, who is Birudanthembara Ganda of Maheeshooru; the pet name of the naughty Nanjasetty. That is : 'Appanna.' (Pulls Nanjasetty towards himself and embraces him)

People of Maheeshooru : (Bow down with folded hands)

Nanjasetty : (His face blooms. After being released from the embrace of the king, tears flow down in streams. With hands folded together, he speaks tearfully and in a trembling voice). Mahaswamy, Mahaswamy .... I am blessed. Very blessed! Mahaswamy, my birth has attained fulfillment today.

Maharaja : (Smiling) This is a day of good fortune when every dweller of Maheeshooru should admit as much. Be calm, Appanna.

The praise singers of Maheeshooru : (With hands lifted up)

Glory to him whose mind is a bee
drinking the nector in the lotus
of the feet of the goddess
who slew the buffalo - monster!

He who is strong armed to undo the intoxicated foes!
The greatest giver who fulfils the cravings of all seekers!
Flower - arrowed like the love god to women!
He whose sceptre - like arm has branched into diverse weapons!
The very sun to the lotuses of his friends!
The lord of the lords of many titles!
The bold one!
The supreme ruler of Srimanmaheeshoorapura
The best city of the bravest on earth
Sriman Maharaja Sir Appanna Thimmaraja Wodeya Mahaswamy
Victory to him! Victory over all directions!

(Royal trumpets are sounded)

ASVAMEDHA

Play Sri Ranga

(Landscape with contours of ups and downs in row looking as if they are intertwined. A tree is seen on the stage to the left of the audience. There is a rock in the middle of the stage. In a couple of minutes enter a man and a woman from left and walk towards the back-stage. Because their backs are turned towards the audience, their features are not evident. The man takes out the bundle from his shoulder, throws it on the rock, sighs and sits down. He is aged about 48. His face, covered with salt-and-pepper stubble, looks like the disputed boundary ridge of farmland, owing to his adherence to the inconvenient precepts of his Dharma on the one hand and exhaustion from journey on the other. The woman comes and stands by his side. As he gasps, She looks at him with pity combined with the charm of her innocent feelings. She is about 19, full of youth. She keeps down her small bundle and adjusts her hair)

WOMAN : Papa, see that hillock, there. If we cross that hillock, we will reach our town. One hour is left for

the day. We'll reach there within that time.

FATHER : (recovering from exhaustion) : Kamala, how many hillocks we've already climbed up and down consoling ourselves "Only this one, only this one"! Shhh . . . . .No . . . . . . I can't manage.

KAMALA : May I take that bundle from you?

FATHER : (Looks at her laughing despondently) : you crazy - Did you think that this bundle is a burden to me? If I can't bear this, how do you think I could wander about the whole country with the family burden on me?

KAMALA : (with distress) : Papa, I know, I am such a burden to you ....

FATHER : (holding her hand seating her) : What is this you are talking, Kamala? Did I say you are a burden to me? I am not one of those mad people who consider women as obstacles in their way. "Women means wheels in the legs," that's what I say isn't it? (Laughs). How far and wide I have wandered looking for a bridegroom for you? If there was no eligible bride in the family would I get the pleasure of this travel? At the most, to satisfy a nagging wife, I would have visited Kashi, Rameswara and Tirupati, and that's all. Now, what a jolly trip we have made : Think we went to Kashi and returned without seeing Visweswara.'

KAMALA : I told you that day - 'Let's visit Visweswara Temple' but you said, 'No', and I did not insist.

FATHER : (removing the turban and wiping his pate) : you silly, what are you suggesting - did we go to Kashi to look for a bridegroom or to see Visweswara ? Moreover, I went to that Matha near the temple that morning to ask for the list of bridegrooms. At first, I thought that I was in a pariah lane or a Mussalmans' lane. I asked, "Why does this place stink so, Bhau Rao?" He said "Because, Visweswara Temple is nearby" I bowed from a distance!

KAMALA : (Laughs) : Enough ..... you make fun of even God! When I bathed in the Ganga that day I too felt like that. I found out why people hold their noses when they take a dip in this sacred water.

FATHER : You see? Some day when a bridegroom is found and your wedding celebrated, I'll tell the priest not to chant "Ganga-Sindhu" sloka. Otherwise, you and I might instinctively hold our noses! (suddenly enraged) "Ganga - Sindhu" my foot! Should I not get a bridegroom in all those lands where these rivers flow? There is prohibition on travelling overseas. Otherwise I would have searched for a bridegroom on the other side of the sea too.

KAMALA : (trying to hide her despondency) : Papa, for my sake, please don't bother in the least from now onwards. Haven't we travelled enough? We have seen people of all lands, I've learnt the ways of cooking and habits of different lands ....I've learnt Hindi, Bengali, Marathi to some extent. Isn't it sufficient that I have acquired skills to

secure a job some how or other and fill my belly? ....Think that I don't exist for you.......... For the sin of having born as a woman, I've troubled you so much.

FATHER : (Lovingly) You say trouble. Are you mad. I realised what I'm worth, from you... Kamala, what do you think it means to be the father of a girl? It's like Vishnu, Himself... Wheel in the feet, conch in hand, a bludgeon on head and lotus in hips. Haven't you see this Vishnu ? (Sits in Padmasana).

KAMALA : Papa, during his travel I was also wondering- a bride in search of a groom is like an Apsara of heaven! Rambha and Urvashi, who appeared before the sages lost in their penances in the past for thousands of years, were really age-less ! I don't know why, but when you said that I was only fourteen to all whom we met, I used to get the same thought. Only once you said, I was thirteen.

FATHER : Yes. I'd have always asserted you were only thirteen. But that pest, Sharda Bill was passed. So, I'd to allow an increment of one year to your age. Hasn't our Dharma preached that man should stick to his word? (breathing deeply) Ha ... my throat is dry, scorched.

KAMALA : Okey.....I'll bring some water from that well. (She opens her father's bundle and takes out two vessels)

FATHER : Okey...I'll declare that my daughter made me drink waters of fourteen worlds. (looks forward)

Hey ! stop. Two persons are coming this way.

KAMALA : (looks in that direction): Looks like father and son.

FATHER : (nodding his head to his daughter): Your reasoning is perfect, I should say. They really are father and son. Look, how we have become experts, knowing people's character and identity quickly by looking at them, just by our experience in searching for bridegrooms.

KAMALA : (looks in that direction): Papa, look, how that old man is dressed. Surely they must be looking for a bride.

FATHER : (also looks in that direction): By the stylish way the boy is walking, I think he is not yet married.

KAMALA : (as above): Looking at the golden bordered turban of the old man, I think both of them, have set out to search for a bride for the old man.

FATHER : (as above): The boy has his hands in the pockets, cap hanging on his head and he is walking head bent down! Hum...! I guess, mostly they should have quarrelled as to who should marry first-father or son. I see all the signs.

KAMALA : (as above): Papa, did you observe? The old man is wearing shoes and his dhoti is golden bordered, and another dhoti with border, on his shoulders.

FATHER : (staring): Oh! Yes, Kamala! What a predicament! To the old man, I've to swear that you are not yet

fourteen..... In case he doesn't approve you, then I must propose you to the boy.... Then I should say that you are past eighteen...(Thinks) What to do now ? By what trick you will grow five years older within ten minutes?

KAMALA : Papa, Why are you afraid? Suppose, the first proposal clicks, well and good. Otherwise, speaking casually you say "When the present pontif of he Matha was the Manager, my daughter recited a sloka. He was greatly pleased. After all she was just six then".

FATHER : (Considering): No, it won't do. The present day youth know more about the history of Badshahs than that of pontifs of Mathas (suddenly)..... Hum... How about asking you directly? Then you say, "I'm eighteen". At that point I feign surprise and say "Lalala! You don't notice the growth of children in you midst! Only the other day our Kamala was not yet fourteen. I still remember" and laugh if off.. (seeing his daughter getting up) Where are you going?

KAMALA : (laughs) : Why are you startled? You don't want water to drink?

FATHER : (Joining in her laughter): Oh, I forgot. I was afraid, forgetting where you are, you were heading for the kitchen to sit down. You remember what you did the last time? When they came to see you, in spite of my entreaties, you were sipping tea in the kitchen.

KAMALA : Oh, I remember. The tea was boiling hot... my fact was oozing sweat. You said "My daughter is an enthusiastic cook. Always in front of the stove".

FATHER : Hum... let it be .... When you go there for water wash your face.

KAMALA : Won't you also smarten up a little?

FATHER : Yes, yes. Take out my cap from that bundle. (Kamala hands him the cap, he puts it on his head). Though I've drawn a blank on all occasions I madly cling to this cap as an article of good omen.

KAMALA : Button up the shirt at the neck.

FATHER : (examining): Lalala! That day at Prayag I'd spread this shirt on the branch of a tree for drying.. While pulling it back, all the buttons have fallen.

KAMALA : Don't worry.... Cover up your neck with the dhoti..

FATHER : What? That's impossible.... That day at Jabalpur Railway Station I'd made a pillow of my coat and slept... On that night mice had a meal of my coat and there are holes in it.... I have to cover them up.... Oh! What a holy dilemma!

KAMALA : (Thinks): If you ask me... now it is already dusk... you remove your shirt and sit down for Sandhyavandana.

FATHER : No....No.... That won't do. Nobody sports a cap while performing Sandhyavandana. (Looks for-

ward) I'll do something about it. They've come near us. Quick, fetch some water. (Kamala goes on the left side) (Suddenly) Kamala. (She stops). Can't say how things turn out. God willing everything will be all right. You have the book in your bundle to demonstrate to them that you can read?

KAMALA : Oh- that book! How long could it last! All the pages had come apart. I used them as plates at breakfasts and lunches during our travel.

FATHER : (Sadly) Lalala! At least you should've kept that "Pativratya Mahatmya".

KAMALA : Don't fear, Papa. Test me in whatever way you like. I'll recite whatever lesson you name. I know them all by heart.

FATHER : Okay, Okay, let it be. (Kamala starts) Kamala. (She stops) Hum.... Don't forget one thing. When I propose you to the old man, my signal to you will be "Number One". Cover your head with the saree-end; When I propose you to the boy, the signal is "Number Two" Put the saree-end on your shoulder. Understand?

KAMALA . No need to fear. Don't I know how to present myself to different kinds of people? (Exits)

FATHER (Sighing): Oh God, even if this negotiation fails, I'll write a new purana in which daughters are born to you.

(Gentleman and his young son enter)

GENTLEMAN : (Looking at father); Sir, is there a station nearby?

FATHER : Sir, there is railway nearby; but the station is far off.

YOUTH : (to Father) Oh! Aren't you Venkappa Rayaru?

FATHER : Indeed, yes. Come here, sit down. Where are you bound to?

GENTLEMAN : (to his son): Gundoo, you know him?

GUNDU : (Sitting on the rock) Who doesn't know Deepotsava-fame Venkapparayaru?

FATHER : Come, Sir sit down. It happened some 10-12 years ago. Once during Deepavali our house was burnt down. That's why they call me Deepotsava-fame Venkkappa. Where are you going? Please sit down....:Wait....the stone is hard.... I'll spread my dhoti, or why, I've my old coat.... I'll spread it.... something soft to sit on (while both of them are protesting, he removes his coat and spreads it and covers his neck with dhoti).

GENTLEMAN : We're going places....Some work....my boy's work.

FATHER : (Looking at Gundu) : Oh, is he your son?

GUNDU : Yes, he is my reverred father. I'm following him with outstreched hand.

GENTLEMAN : You see, Venkappa....for the last two years I've been wandering with outstreched hand for his

sale.... He has not liked any, so far.

VENKAPPA : (smiling) we too were like that when we were boys, Sir.

GENTLEMAN : (wiping the sweat): No, Sir, we were not like that at all. We were on the right path before we were eighteen....

VENKAPPA : The present generation is more educated.

GUNDU : You please tell him, Venkappa. Now we have seen about twenty places. When I found each one of them to be not good enough for me and said so, my reverred father had flared up on me.

VENKAPPA : (to Gentleman): Sir, times have changed now. Today's boys are independent—spirited, want to find their own way.

GENTLEMAN : I really didn't want to have him on my back and go about places. Because of the nagging woman at home, I had no choice.

FATHER : (turning to the left, suddenly): Kamala, the second one,....fetch the second vessel....see, we have here...our..er...

GENTLEMAN : (looking in that direction) Who is there? Your wife?

VENKAPPA : (artificial laugh): How many people are fooled like you, Sir....Hahaha.... Resemblance between mother and daughter is so striking.

GUNDU : (looking in that direction): Is she your daughter?

VENKAPPA : Aha.... that's what she is. She is also modern in her outlook. She's also bent upon having everything her own way. How have I tried to marry her off. She says, I'll marry whenever I want. Now I have given up.

GENTLEMAN : (surprised): Not yet married? Lucky, you're not in the clutches of people like my elder sister! For the convenience of running the household I intend to marry.... My elder sister'll never approve mature girl.... You are great, Venkappa, you haven't yet married off your daughter.

VENKAPPA : (artificial laughter): What do you mean, not yet, Sir? What do you think her age is, any way? (Proudly) Not yet fourteen (Hurriedly looking to the side) Kamala, the first one.... you know, the first vessel, bring it here. He wants water, not that one, I told you the first one. Ah, yes, the first vessel.

GENTLEMAN : (confused): Not yet fourteen! Still I say, poor little girls have no happiness even if they are physically well-grown.... They should have the experience of running house-holds.... Girls, to get married, must be at least sixteen, that's what I say.

GUNDU : Sir, don't think of marriage for your daughter for at least another 5-6 years.

GENTLEMAN : No....There is no meaning in allowing the girls to grow that old....What do you say for the obstinacy

of my boy? He refuses to look at any girl less than 18.

VENKAPPA : (looking at the side) Kamala, quick, double up with the Second Vessel that leaks, doesn't it? Mind you, the second one, bring it here (Looking at both of them) Sir, house-hold management is an instinct with women. It has no relationship with age, whatsoever. Now, see for yourself, our Kamala was managing routine house-hold work during the times of the great influenza. Then see was only six or seven.

GENTLEMAN : (Surprised) Great influenza, you said ? That was 14-15 years ago?

VENKAPAA : No, No. Not that long ago, really.

GUNDU : That long ago Sir, the war ended in Europe, People started dying in our country. That was in 1918.

VENKAPPA : No, No. You are really exaggerating. Do you really mean to say our Kamala is 19-20?

GUNDU : Influenza doesn't coincide with Sharda Bill, any way. More than 14 years.

VENKAPPA : Why argue ? She is here. Let's ask her. (Enter Kamala). Kamala, how old are you ? Don't be shy. Nobody is here for marriage talks. Between this gentleman here and me, a matter of conflict has arisen. Tell us, how old are you?

KAMALA : (with bent head): Running 19.

GENTLEMAN : (gasping) I knew it !

GUNDU : Didn't I say !

VENKAPPA : (as if surprised) 19 ! Surely. You don't notice the growth of someone in the household who is always with you ! Only the other day she was just 14 ! Think of it !

GENTLEMAN : Don't be afraid Venkappa, I like girls... To grow up.

VENKAPPA : (to daughter) Did you listen, Kamala, What this gentleman said? He says, girls should marry at 18-19 (to both of them) But still, Sirs, I don't like girls growing up so much, myself. (To daughter) Hum.... Give this gentleman some water..... What, you are already blushing?

GUNDU : Sir, I hope you've educated your daughter?

GENTLEMAN : Gundu insists that women should be educated. If you ask me, there is nosense in educating women. Not in the least.

VENKAPPA : Kamala knows reading and writing. She can talk in Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, too. That apart, home science, cooking, tailoring, she is quite well-versed in all these. Now, look at my shirt, torn in so many places. If I say I'll get a new one stitched, she wouldn't hear, She should patch this seamy shirt, when we get back home.

GENTLEMAN : (getting up) I sympathies with you, Sir,

VENKAPPA : Why Sir, you got up?

GUNDU : (getting up) We must reach some town before it's dark.

VENKAPPA : (Laughing) Hum... If you desire to test Kamala's reading skills, you may. Brides can be inspected any where. Let the auspicious happen here and now, as the saying goes.

GENTLEMAN : (Surprised) What did you say, inspection of the bride?

VENKAPPA : (Opening his month) Er...Er... You said something... You were searching.... For your son.... That's why...

GENTLEMAN : (Laughing loudly) Oh! You're fooled by our out pourings! I am searching for my son, not a bride, but a job....

GUNDU : (as if in despondency) That's why, treating me as a bride, my father is going about, exhibiting me for inspection...Papa, any way, tell them our caste, gotra, age, degree etc., It may be useful some day.

VENKAPPA : (Shocked) May be. He may get a job some day or the other, surely.... Thought you were in search of a bride..

GENTLEMAN : (Laughing) May be, we belong to the same gotra,

Venkappa. Both of us depend on the generosity of others for livelihood.... Let it be. We may meet again.... (Gentleman and Gundu bid good-bye and exit).

VENKAPPA : (with clenched jaws) When we meet again...... I'll thrash them till they beg for water. Scuml Wants to fool me and relaxl what does he think the father of a girl to be a- temple ? Plays pranks like a monkey l

KAMALA : (Sadly) Papa, Papa, why do you flare up on others for our misfortune ?

VENKAPPA : (woefully) Flare up ? That old man is a mean scoundrel. Looking at you, he has the impudence to ask me, Is she your wife?

KAMALA : Poor fellow l How should he know?

VENKAPPA : (with rage) How should he know, you say ? I'm calling you "Kamala" by name. Shouldn't he understand ? Have you heard of anybody calling his wife by name ? He's old enough to bring a step-mother to his grand-children. Can't he understand? They're all mean fellows. That's all.

KAMALA : (Camly): Oh, let it go, Papa. Drink some water. Why shout and strain your throat for nothing ?

VENKAPPA : (adamantly) No, I'll perform his obsequies with this water. Give me that sesame tied to the corner of my dhoti in my bundle- take it out, I say. (Gundu returns running).

GUNDU : (gasping) Sir,Sir, I forgot to drink water in that hurry. Can I have some water ?

VENKAPPA : (getting up impetuously) Get last, you mad fellow, there are robbers around, Go and reach some town before it's dark.

GUNDU : (Seized with fear) You - You are not robbers ?

VENKAPPA : (with desdain) We're not robbers (while Gundu heaves a sigh of relief, shouting at the top of his voice) we are HIGHWAYMEN.

(Gundu shouts "AYYAAYYO" and runs away).

KAMALA : (looking in the direction of Gundu's exit) : Poor fellow! How you terrorised him! He ran away without drinking water.

VENKAPPA : (obstinately) Let him go, wretched fellow I He didn't come here to drink water, I know. He came again only to have a good look at you.

KAMALA : (shyly) Enough. You always imagine something or the other. They must have walked a long way They must be thirsty in this hot sun.

VENKAPPA : (hopelessly) Kamala, tell me, who could've walked as far and wide as we've ? True, I should not utter inauspicious words. Even if all the waters of Gerusoppe Falls are offered in Tarpana in my, obsequies, my thirst will remain unquenched. I've so much burning fire my stomach.

KAMALA : Papa, what others can do? May be I've some blemish. Otherwise, why should I not get married?

VENKAPPA : (staring) There is no blemish in your, child.

KAMALA : (Partly to herself) Why no blemish? Even with all the cautions you've taken to hide the matter, I know everything. I've read all the letters.

VENKAPPA : (Surprised) All the letters ?

KAMALA : (as above) All the letters. I'm reminded of that mythological story about the demon with one thousand arms and heads. (Venkappa stares at his daughter with disbelief) He would lose his organs one by one at the chanting of Mantras stanza by stanza, it is said. Likewise I've lost my organs one by one on the receipt of letters from those who came to see me as a prospective bride. The one's who came first said in their letter that I've defective eyes. I wept and wept so much that my eyes were swollen and I couldn't see myself in the mirror. Again some one said that my left hand is shorter than the right hand. Then I started carrying the water pot in my left hand just to lengthen it to the right size. Oh, my beloved mother ! If all that they said in their letter were to be true. I doubt whether I'm really alive or dead ! It's really my good fortune no body said, "The girl has no life in her body".

VENKAPPA : (distracted) What, are you crazy! You're not sufficiently experienced, really. Why should you

believe those words? You should never trust the description of a girl given by people looking for brides and also the description of girls by poets. For the one, the girls are ugly for he wants to extract more dowry; the other says, the girl is a stunning beauty to increase the sales of his books. Both have a greedy eye on others' purses. You should never trust them. Both are wretched types having no worldly experience.

KAMALA : (suddenly) Papa, still, there is one poet and my trust in him is increasing day by day. He surely possesses wordly experience. I feel.

VENKAPPA : (laughs) You believe poets have worldly experience, but you don't have it yourself.

KAMALA : May be ! In that case he must be a new type of poet. What he says is too true to life. In this novel "Viratapurusha" he says "Women who employ all their knowledge and intelligence just to please their men, that means to say, all the women in our society, are prostititues.

VENKAPPA : (Suddenly enraged) Stop, Stop this dirty talk ! He must be a perverted rascal ! Who the hell is he ? Insulting our sacred Aryan Women ! That demon's book should be thrown to garbage and burnt....

KAMALA : Papa, there is no point in your attack on him. The book has not yet been printed.

VENKAPPA : (still angry) In that case.... he himself must be burnt alive.... the wicked sinner....

KAMALA : Okey.....Having been born as a Hindu, he can't escape it.

VENKAPPA : (as above) What a dirty idea he is spreading in the society, that ville fellow.... If I ever meet him once..... at least, if I come to know his name....

KAMALA : His name is "Sriranga"

VENKAPPA : (Mocking) Sriranga !Sriranga ! Shameless, fellow! Himself a heretic, prefixes "Sri" to his name! Look at his audacity!

KAMALA : Poor fellow! What can he do! May be, wants to have the confort of "Sri" at least in his name-

VENKAPPA : Didn't I tell you? Writing about unrealistic things, these crazy poets! Will they ever enjoy the pleasure of "Sri"? Will the anti-God ever be rich and happy?

KAMALA : No, Papa, you're wrong. The selfish God who created the world married "Sri" Himself. That's why these people are angry with God.

Venkappa : (forcefully) Stop, I don't what to hear his praise anymore. Don't I know his mind! He feels happy whenever some evil strikes society. He looks for a theme to write about in such situations.. Nobody knows how he thinks, what he writes... I wonder what Brahma intended him to be!

KAMALA : Papa, if one jabs your eye with a finger, the same

eye cannot see the finger....Still isn't what he says true? How I decked myself whenever people came to see me! On occasions, the wedding looked almost certain and I dreamt of my own family, too, with all those whom I liked, with all those whom you liked-you see? Betweeen me and a prostitute....is there any difference?

VENKAPPA : (looking to the side) Hum.... Enough of the praise of that rebel! Look, someone is coming this way...

KAMALA : (looks) Y're right papa, black coat, walking stick, turban on the head-looks like a reformed type .....

VENKAPPA : (looking in that direction) Trousers-or pants?- wearing what you call it - must be a reformed person. Still, look, how he is walking, like an orthodox Brahmin in the simpiga lane - dancing and prancing. My best guess is, he must have taken to the pants quite recently, a newly-reformed one.

KAMALA : (looking) Papa, see how his ring flashes in this evening sunlight....Hum... Mostly, he must be on his way to inspect a bride.....

VENKAPPA : (nodding his head) Aha! He's carrying no baggage in his hand. That confirms, he is on his way to inspect a bride. Do you know, Kamala, these people think that the father of prospective bride is like a Tourists' Special Train: Everything provided wherever they go. Lalala! He'll be here in a minute. Go, wash you face again, come neatly and look smart with kumkum on the forehead. Let

us see. Have some kumkum in your hand.... I'll signal you whether he is a Smarta or a Vaishnava. You can smear kumkum according to my signal. If he is a Smarta I'll make a shivering sound like "Huhuhu....." If he's a Vaishnava I'll clap and in the Sandhyavandana fashion. Then you come with the appropriate style of kumkum mark.

KAMALA : (getting up) Looks as if, kumkum itself is not fortunate enough to adorn me. How many times, for the sake of how many people haven't I put on the kumkum mark?

VENKAPPA : (sympathetically) You crazy girl, why do you talk inauspiciously?

KAMALA : No, I was reminded of "Sriranga" words - all the maidens are eternal sumangalis - (exit) (Venkappa sits down collapsing on the rock, beating his forehead. In a while Kumbarakeri Kulkarni enters).

VENKAPPA : Aa.......Sir...

KULKARNI : (sartled, as if waking up from a dream) Ayyayyo ......who is it?

VENKAPPA : (camly) It is me, Sir, a Brahmin ....Why are you so nervous?

KULKARNI : (taking breath) Ayyo, blessed man! Look at me ... I was shocked. It was a false alarm! What a trick, I say! You said "Sir", and I was shocked ! Nobody has addressed me as "Sir" so far, only our

Mamledar, would address anybody "Sir" whenever he was seized with rage. For me, you see.. I was thinking something else.. that's why....

VENKAPPA : Okey .. Okey.... May I know your name?

KULKARNI : Shumbha.

VENKAPPA : Why, Sir, you're angry with me just for asking your name?

KULKARNI : Me, angry with you? (Suddenly laughing) Aha....see... just as I was startled when you addressed me "Sir", you're afraid when I said my name is Shumbha. My name is Shumbha. It's like this. I din't know how to read for a long time. What do you say for this - I used to sign my name as Shumbha instead of Shambhu. Hahaha ...... what do you say for this ?

VENKAPPA : (feigning shiver) Huhuhu........

SHUMBHA : (overcome with fear) Hey! what's this?

VENKAPPA : (camly) Haha....Nothing, you're quite funny, really. You see, I wanted to laugh, but then I was seized with a fit of cough, that's why that sound 'Huhuhu' was forced from my throat. (Again produces that sound) Come on, sit down.

SHUMBHA : (despondently) I don't deserve that honour .... If I sit down, my pants get wrinkles.

VENKAPPA : (not following) What's that?

SHUMBHA : (taking a breath) There's no end to my woes. . . . My mother is a stubborn woman ....I'm on my way for an important work ...... Mother is very keen .... For my success, she has even vowed to the gods - what do you say - if I'm successful, she's vowed to gift gopichandana to Brahmins. That's what I call madness of women. What do you say?

VENKAPPA : Gopichandana....(suddenly claps his hands) Haha..... I knew you, you're going for an auspicious work. Hum..... What do you mean by "If"? All is God's will.

SHUMBHA : No, You see, I was born in a Smarta family. Then, Kulkarni, one of our well-wishers- he is a Vaishnava-adopted me into his family. That's why I said, which God...see... should I place the Shaligrama on the back of the Nandi and call this hybrid double humped bull, a God? Because I've become a Kuldarni, I've to lament like this. And that's why, you see, I'm so busy about this important work...see...Left to myself, I would have been happy.

VENKAPPA : (imitating cough and clapping) Aha! What a sense of humour! (Controlling laughter and looking at the direction his daughter went) Left to your self? How you think the world should go round? Okey, I understand.... Now, about the important work .... Hum, auspicious ventures shouldn't be delayed ....

SHUMBHA : What did you say?

VENKAPPA : Sir, I consider myself lucky .... To meet you today. What a fortunate coincidence! Consider your mother's vow is fulfilled.

SHUMBHA : (disdainfully) Vow, my foot! It's nothing buyt madness of women, I say .... That's what they've come to having remained fools....

VENKAPPA : Aha! You're a protagonist of women's education.... I knew you were a reformist.... Look at my daughter.... I bet you can't guess how intelligent she is.... Because you're a reformist, I can tell you.... She sees those modern plays.... you know, those plays with modern ideas by ....what's his name? Hum....ha...."Sriranga". She goes to theatres to see his plays and she understands them better than others who call themselves the elite.... Tell me, what's the use of a degree compared to such intelligence ?

SHUMBHA : (not understanding) Hey, what're you hinting? Did I say that your daughter is uneducated?

VENKAPPA : (laughs) In that case, let's talk it over here and now.....Come on Sir, sit down. My daughter doesn't mind wrinkles on your pants. So much better than the bridegrooms with wrinkled faces.

SHUMBHA : (alarmed) Hey, what's that?

VENKAPPA : (camly) Nothing....... Anyway you're going for the inspection of a bride....

SHUMBHA : (with consternation) Inspection of bride! Shit- I'm going to meet the Divisional Commissioner who has camped here as a punishment for going to Kulkarni's family on adoption.....Shit, bride inspection! Already blessed with two wives - one Smarta and anothe Vaishnava.....Shit--good-bye! (Exits showing his contempt. Venkappa stands up inflamed with anger. Kamala enters slowly as if in a dream).

VENKAPPA : (agitated) Holy dilemma - (Clatters his teeth).

KAMALA : (agitated) Papa, papa, it's all my misfortune Who can help?

VENKAPPA : (not attentive to her) What a holy dilemma! The root cause of my misery is in my brahmin Dharma..... No, I don't want to hang on to this wreathed, cowardly Brahmana Dharma, any longer. (Takes out a piece of paper and a broken pencil from his pocket) I'll launch an expedition of universal conquest; I'll perform Aswamedha Yaga.... (writes) Behold- On this earth Venkappa begot a daughter, Kamala - Her marriage is to be performed:

I challange and invite any youth with a bare subsistance to stop her and marry her.

(With excitement he sticks the slip of paper on her forehead).

Tr. by M. S. K. Prabhu

THE ACQUAINTANCES

Chandrashekar Patil

The curtain rises. A room. A sofa, a chair to the left and a chair to the right. Newspapers lying helter-skelter on the front stool. Husband is reading the newspaper on the sofa. He wears spectacles. Aged 35-40. Wife to the right side of Husband is plying the needle. She also wears spectacles. The relation between them is that of silence. They never face each other while talking. Dense silence for a moment.

Husband - (Lifting his face suddenly) By the way ....

Wife - (Lifting her face) Yes, what happened, by the way?

Husband - Thoo. Wanted to tell you something, but clean forgot it.

Wife - What did you want to tell me?

Husband - Something! Something flashed in my mind, got down into the heart and came up to the throat. I opened my mouth to tell it to you.

Wife - It got stuck there, didn't it? Why not spit it out?

Husband ; Shall I spit it out or swallow it?

Wife - Ayya. As they say "To swallow the saliva is not to have a meal."

Husband - 'To fart is not to shit'. Isn't it?

(Wife is silent)

A little vulgar? Is it?
(Silence)

Excuse me, then.
(Rapt in the newspapers)

Ha. Got it.

Wife - Got what?

Husband - How long is it since we got married?

Wife - Oh, Is this your great question?

Husband - Why? Could you guess it before I asked it?

Wife - What else could you see in the papers but the divorce column?

Husband - Ha. Very smart you are! As for me, I never get the question until and unless it comes out of my mind in the form of words.

(Wife : Silent. Plying the needle)

I am a human being, though.

(Knocking on the door. The couple are unaware of it. Guest knocks again.)

Wife - What's it?

Husband - What's that?

Wife - That 'kat kat?'

Husband - You mean that 'kat kat'. That some sound.

Wife - Sound of what?

Wife - Tapping what?

(Knocking grows louder)

Ha ..... It's the sound of tapping the door.

(She rises)

Husband - Which door? Front door or backdoor?

Wife - Front door.

('Anybody in?' Is heard.)

Husband - What does he say?

Wife - He wants to know if anybody is in.

Husband - Are we in?

Wife - Please stop it?

Husband - Who is that?

Wife - Must be some acquaintance.
(She goes to the door)

Husband - Yes, some acquaintance.

(Absorbed again in the newspapers. Wife opens the door. The guest enters. He wears a khadi dhoti, nehru-shirt, gandhi-cap and an umbrella under his arm. Leaving his chappals at the door, the guest enters the house, staring at the Husband. Wife says, 'Come in sir, come in; he is in.' She sits in the left chair.)

Guest - Is he in, madam? Ha. Good. I was wondering whether he was in or not.

(He sits on the chair on which the wife had sat. He smiles at the Husband who has kept the newspaper on the stool and is staring at the Guest.)

Morning sit.

Husband - Morning.

Guest - (waits for half a minute) Can you locate me?

Husband - (Searching for his spectacles which he has kept on the stool and forgotten) Sorry, I can't.

Guest - What's it you can't get, sir?

Husband - Spects. (He gets it and wears it.)

Ha, got it.

Guest - Spects is not the thing, sir. I asked about ..... acquaintance.

Husband - Acquaintance ? Whose?

Guest - I mean mine.

Husband - Your acquaintance ? Please wait a minute.
(He scanned the guest from top to bottom. He says loudly 'this cap, this shirt, this dhoti,' Scratches his head and keeps fingers on his mouth ...)

Wait, wait a bit.

Guest - Sir, do you remember the lines from Harishchandra?

Husband - What?

Guest - You see, sir, when Harishchandra renounces his kingdom, he says: 'This kingdom, this treasure, this army, this ...' You see, I said this just because I chanced to remember it.

Husband - (Stares at him) Ha .. You are quite a shrewd man.

(He starts reading newspaper again. Remains silent for a moment. The Guest feels restless.)

Husband - (Lifting his face) By the way, I had forgotten you.

Guest - (Hopefully) Is that so?

Husband - From the moment you came here, I have been wanting to tell something to my wife .. for you ...

Guest - What did you want to tell her?

Husband - To tell her to get some tea ready for you.

(Breaks into guffaws. Then the Guest also begins to laugh.)

Guest - Really? Strange.

Husband - Yes, terribly strange.

Guest - By the way, you got it now at least?

Husband - Yes, already. Look, I am wearing it.

Guest - What?

Husband - Spects.

Guest - It's not spects, sir. It's me I'm referring to.

Husband - You? Look here. Your cap, your shirt and your dhoti ...

Guest - Hoo.

Husband - I can recollect.

Guest - How's that?

Husband - Your cap is a Gandhi-cap, isn't it?

Guest - Yes it is. It is a Gandhi - cap.

Husband - (Proudly) And your shirt ... is a Nehru shirt. Isn't it?

Guest - Yes, yes.

Husband - Then it's over! ... But ...

Guest - But ?

Husband - I can recollect everything but your face. Ninety percent of the problem is solved by now. But ...

(The Guest leans forward on his palm and exclaims 'what a badluck!' The Husband is immersed in reading the newspaper.)

Guest - Sir?

Husband - (Lifting his face) Called me?

Guest - Yes sir, I did.

Husband - Why?

Guest - Anyway you couldn't recognise me. At least I ...

Husband - Chhe, chhe, why do you speak like that? Just ten percent of the problem remains unsolved. It's not much ... That's why you ...

Guest - Sir, do you remember? Two years ago.

Husband - Means?

Guest - It means year before last.

Husband - How does it mean two years ago? It should be two years back.

Guest - Chhe. What year is this, sir? It's 1970. Isn't it?

Husband - It is 19 hundred and 70.

Guest - Yes, it is 19 hundred and 70.

Husband - A. D.

Guest - Yes, A. D. a year before last means what?

Husband - What?

Guest - You deduct two years from 19 hundred and 70.

Husband - You can deduct it yourself.

Guest - Yes, I deduct. The result is 68.

Husband - How much did you deduct ?

Guest - Two

Husband - Then it should be 19 hundred and 68. Not merely 68.

Guest - Yes. It is 19 hundred and 68.

Husband - Now the calculation is correct ! (Reads the paper again. Silent for a moment

Guest - In 19 hundred and 68 ...

Husband - (Lifting his face) The calculation is correct ... why then do you...

Guest - Chhe! In 19 hundred 68, you had come.

Husband - Where to?

Guest - To the village.

Husband - To which village?

Guest - To our village.

Husband - 'To your village' means what?

Guest - It means 'To the village in which I live.'

Husband - Can the village in which you live become your village?

Guest - Why not?

Husband - Now you are in this city. Does it become your city? Now you are in this house. Does it become your house? You are a very strange person indeed! You seem to be an expert only addition and deduction!

(Holds the paper again)

Guest - Let it be, sir. That you you had come to our village.

Husband - (angrily) Don't say 'our village'. say 'a village' and I had come there. (Thinks again) By the by ... had I come O had I gone .. ?

Guest - You had come, sir.

Husband - What wrong is there if I say 'I had gone'?

Guest - Nothing wrong.

Husband - Does it mean then that there's no difference at all between 'coming' and 'going'?

Guest - My God! Your words are ...

(The Wife brings tea and gives it to them. Then she sits knitting.)

Husband - (Suddenly to his wife) See, I recognised.

Wife - Whom?

Husband - This gentleman.

(The Guest is so happy that he stops drinking his tea for a while and sits with his mouth open)

Wife - How's that?

Husband - I recognise his shirt and cap.

Wife - Hmoo...

Husband - But somehow I cannot recognise your face. Anyway, that matters least, you see...

(Disappointed, the Guest quaffs the tea in a single guip and keeps the cup and saucer on the table)

Guest - In 1968?

Guest - Yes, madam.

Wife - But then, I myself didn't know him.

Husband - (Lifting his face) She knew me.

Wife - I hadn't even seen him.

Husband - So what?

Wife - We weren't married yet.

Husband - So what?

Wife - We hadn't yet settled down.

Husband - So what?

Wife - I did not know you at all.

Husband - You did know me.

(Reads the paper. She knits. Silence. The Guest is at a loss)

Guest - Sir, in 19 hundred and 68 you had come to our village to deliver a lecture!

Husband - (Lifts his face gradually. Sees the Guest queerly and speaks dramatically) Yes, I had come there!

Guest - Yes, sir. There was a large gathering.

Husband - The auditorium was packed with listeners!

Guest - Yes, sir, They had come there not only to listen to you but also to see you.

Husband - The listeners were spectators also!

Guest - We had specially invited you.

Husband - Due to the public demand we had arrived there as Chief Guest!

Guest - The moment you stood up to speak ...

Husband - (Enthusiastically) The audience began to clap ear-shatteringly! The gods cheered us! The god of rains sprinkled the fragrant liquids! The lightning blew the trumpet in the sky! The thunder shone dazzling...

Guest - It rained cats and dogs. Still ...

Husband - Still the audience was enraptured in the speech.

Guest - What a wonderful speech it was! What a subject! What a brilliance!

Husband - (Normal voice) By the way, what did I speak on that day?

Guest - On Life and Literature.

Husband - (suddenly gets up from the sofa and stands on the stool with his back to the audience. Wife and Guest remain speechless.)

Aha! Life and Literature!
Ladies and gentlemen!
Or relatives and neighbours!
Those who are dozing and
Those who are stopping!
(Lifts his face and sees the Guest)
Camels with lifted cranes!
(Seeing the Wife who does not see him)
Oh, you tortoises that lift not your heads!
Hear! Hear!

Today I ...
(Bends a little and to the Guest)
This day is 'today', isn't it?

Guest - Yes, yes, sir.

Husband - (In the manner of giving a speech) Today you know why I am standing before you on this dias. I am going to deliver a lecture on some subject. I have got on to this stool.. The subject is ... is....

Guest - Life and Literature!

Husband - Hma ... Life and Literature !

(To the audience)

Come on, clap now. I am not the man to be easily hoodwinked by anything or anyone. As you all know already that there are hedonists who have slept on the rocks; that there are yogis who have slept on the breasts of women. (Looks at his wife) If I appear vulgar the gentlewomen may kindly excuse me. I am such a yogi! But no sooner had I known this subject than I jumped at it. What's the subject? It's Life and Literature! What do you mean by that? What does 'Life' mean? What does 'Literature' mean? What does 'and' mean?

(Looks around. Pause)

It only means that they do not know anything about this.

Guest - Chhe! They don't know anything sir. Poor fellows. Don't mistake them. Chhe!

Husband - If you don't mistake me, I am going to say a few words on Life and Literature as desired by the people.

(Pronouncing the words one by one)

Literature is life's reflection.

(With these words he bows to the audience; Climbs down the stool and sits on the sofa and begins to read. The Guest slupms into a chair)

Guest - Sir?

Husband - (Lifting his face) Called me?

Guest - Yes sir.

Husband - Who?

Guest - Who else but you, sir. I wanted to speak a word...

Husband - Why a word? I spoke four words. It rightly tallies with my promise.

Guest - That's not it sir. One means not 'only one' but 'one by one' ...

Husband - Then four means 'four only', doesn't it?
(Suddenly gets up and stands on the stool and begins the speech)

"'Literature' means life's reflection" means what? 'Literature' means what? 'Life' means what? 'Reflection' means what? 'Means' means what?

(Looks around slowly)

Reflection means the image reflected from Life. Everything is all right now. Or we see in literature the reflection of the image of life. Clap, all of you.

(They clap)

Reflection is topsy-turvy. Life becomes topsy-turvy in literature. In other words LIFE becomes FILE in literature. This is my theory. For example, I'll give you an illustration.

(Suddenly pulls the Guest's shirt and takes away his gandhicap)

He wears a gandhicap in life. What if he want to wear a ghodse cap? He should rush into literature. Because literature....

Guest - (Snatching away his cap) Is the reflection of life.

Husband - (Pointing at his wife) Your attention please. She is a woman and my wife in life. But in literature she becomes a man and my husband. Here my theory takes on a mysterious edge. What's the mystery? It is: I am a man. My wife is a man. My wife is my husband. A man is the husband of another man! Clap now.

(They clap)

With these words I wind up my speech today.

(Sits on the sofa and reads the newspaper. the Guest also sinks into the chair. Both are silent)

Guest - Sir, can you recognise me now at least? After your speech it was I who proposed the vote of thanks. I gave an illustration from The Song of Harishchandra....

Husband - (Surprised) Is that so?

Guest - Yes sir .... I was sitting just to your right.

Husband - And me?

Guest - You were sitting on my left.

Husband - Is that so? I get it now.

Guest - Got it?

Husband - (In a dreaming voice) Something black was lying on the right arm of my chair... Something like a snake ... Something like a piece of black snake.. It had hairs all around its body... At the otehr end something like a hood was dangling ... I was staring at that only ... In the light of electric lamps the hairs were shining brightly .. I wanted to touch them... But I was afraid... The fear entered into my eyes ... and then into my body... Even now that black thing comes in my dream and says: 'I know you, I shall devour you.'

(In the normal voice)

Now I can recognise it.

Guest - Recognise what sir?

Husband - That black thing .. Would you mind folding your sleeve up the left arm? Let me see it ...

(The Guest folds the sleeve up)

Hma. Yes, yes. This is the thing I referred to. This is exactly the same.

(The Guest is flabbergasted)

At last I could recognise your hand.

Guest - What about my face?

Husband - How can I recognise it when I have not seen it at all!?

Guest - Oh Gosh. I don't know what to do now. (Silent)

Husband - Look here, for example (Pointing our his wife to the Guest) I had seen the face of this lady.

Wife - (Lifting up her face) When had you seen it?

Husband - Sometimes. I don't know when exactly.

Wife - Was it before I could see yours?

Husband - Before that. Even before you were born.

Wife - Tell me where you saw me.

Husband - Somewhere ... say in a dream or in a poem.

Guest - What happened next sir?

Husband - You see, you have to get whatever you happen to see ... So I searche for it ... And finally got it.

Wife - Got what?

Husband - I got the face of my dream. Got the eyes in that face ... Got the dream in those eyes ... Got the face of my dream ... Got the eyes

of that face ...

Wife - Got them where?

Husband - In the face.

Wife - The face?

Husband - I got the face on your shoulders.

Guest - Sir, what about my face?

Husband - I haven't recognised yet. Nor can I ... Please be silent. (Silent for a minute. Again apologetically) Did you want anything from me?

Guest - Yes sir.

Husband - What?

Guest - I have a son. He is very poor ...

Husband - Shall I give him some money?

Guest - And he has no job ..

Husband - Shall I give him a job?

Guest - That's why we want a certificate.

Husband - Shall I give one of my own certificates?

Guest - We want a character Certificate.

Husband - Shall I give my character?

Guest - Not that sir. We want a mere certificate.

Husband - Means what? What shall I write?

Guest - So and so. Like this and like that.

Husband - Like this and like that means what?

Guest - It's like this: "This boy is known to me for so many years .... He bears a very good moral character. He is the son of such and such a person who is known to me very intimately. He can be appointed for such and such a job. He is sure to bring credit to the authorities." If you certify like this he is sure to get a job. Besides, this fellow will remember your kind self until death...

Husband - Until whose death? His or mine?

Guest - Until my death sir, because he is my son.

Husband - You are sure you won't forget me?

Guest - No, never sir.

Husband - Guarantee?

Guest - Guarantee.

Husband - Then take down. I shall go on dectating, you go on writing.

(The Guest takes out pen and paper from his pocket and gets ready. The Husband speaks in a legal tone except when asking him to leave some blank space.)

I, the undersigned, had gone to a place called —— leave some blank for the name of the village — two years back or before —— leave some blank for date and year —— to deliver an inspiring lecture on 'Life and Literature' at a funciton arranged by the natives of that village. No sooner I had concluded my speech than Mr. —— leave some blank for your name — stood up and gave a hearty vote of thanks. The son of the said eprson, Mr. —— leave some blank for his name — is known to me and related to me for som many precious lives. His economic condition at present is very critical and pitiable. The said boy is the branch of a strong and big tree of family which ic quite ignorant of prostitution and robbery. Endowed with all these virtues, he is enemy No. 1 of Six Enemies like Desire, Hatres, Miserliness, Attachment, Pride and Jealousy. This boy can be given any job that he wants —— let it be the post of a peon or that of the President of India —— without any hesitation or gossip. By so doing .....

(The Guest is flabbergasted ans sits with is forehead in his palm.)

The banner of reputation of the said office or of the Indian Continent may be hoisted all over the world. Besides, the boy who is in the habit of eating food and not dung, is sure not only to be grateful but also to pray for the spiritual peace of the office or the person who helps himm. I the undersigned wish him by my body, mind and speech, all the glory and success to this bachelor - angel in his work. Victory to Karnataka! Victory to India! Victory to the World! Belgaum belongs to our State. Victory to —— leave some blank for your family deity —— (Seeing the Guest) Sufficient?

Guest - Enough. It's more than enough sir.

Husband - You may take it away now ... OK? What about signature?

Guest - You haven't signed sir.

Husband - You may sign it yourself, what's there?

Guest - All right sir.

Husband - Your son will definitely get the job. If he is appointed as a peon ask him to come and see me. Or if he becomes the President or otherwise of India we shall go to meet his at Delhi. Correct?

Guest - As you please, sir.

Husband - (To his wife) Shall we go to Delhi? Let's enjoy ourselves being the guest of the President. (To the Guest) You also should come there.

Guest - Certainly sir. (Reading the newspaper again. The wife is knitting. Silence. The Guest stand up) I'll see you again, sir.

Husband - What do you mean? Haveen't you already seen me?

Guest - I mean I shall go, sir.

Husband - What do you mean? You haven't gone yet?

Guest - OK, See you again sir.

Husband - OK, See you again.

(The Guest goes the way he can came, along with chappals and umbrella. Silence for a minute)

Husband - (To his wife, siddenly) How long is it since we got married?

Wife - Two years.

Husband - Did I live with you smoothly the first year?

Wife - Yes, you did.

Husband - Did I develop bad habits after that?

Wife - No, you didn't.

Husband - Did I beat you, ill-treat you and drive you out of house?

Wife - No, you didn't.

Husband - Do I have a male issue by you?

Wife - No, you don't.

Husband - Do I, then, have a female issue?

Wife - No, you don't.

Husband - (With sudden anger) Then what about the divorce advertised here?

Wife - I haven't sought any divorce.

Husband - Then who has sought it?

Wife - Somebody.

Husband - 'Somebody' means who?

Wife - Someone unacquainted.

Husband - From whom?

Wife - From someone unacquainted.

Husband - Then you are not ... with me.

Wife - Why? Are you not acquainted with me? Didn't you tell me that you saw the eyes of my dream face on my shoulders?

Husband - (Gently_ Did I say like that?

Wife - Yes, you did.

Husband - Then, pleas excuse me.

(Silence)

Wife - (In a dreaming voice) Do you remember our marriage?

Husband - Remember?

Wife - Yes, I remember it.

Husband - (Surprised) Yes?

Wife - Yes. The fire was burning in front of us. somebody was chanting the mantras ... All the people were throwing yellow rice grains on us. The bandset were playing the music... I was sitting by your left.

Husband - And me? Right?

Wife - By my right. You ties the mangala - sutra around my neck.

Once you ogléd at me.

Husband - How?

Wife - You used to love my eyes so much! You used to say that my eyes were full of wine.. Do you remember what you called me?

Husband - What did I call you?

Wife - Wine-eyed damsel.

Husband - Was it so?

Wife - Yes.

Husband - Is it true?

Wife - Yes, it is.

Husband - Hma. Very strange, isn't it?

(Silence for half a minute)

Wife - (Lovingly. No knitting) Excuse me.

Husband - (Reading the newspaper) Did you call me?

Wife - Yes.

Husband - Who?

Wife - Who else but you?

Husband - You called me? But why?

Wife - Look into my eyes, please.

Husband - Look into your eyes?

Wife - Yes....

Husband - Haven't I looked into your eyes anytime?

Wife - No, never after the marriage.

Husband - Really?

Wife - Really.

Husband - What must be the reason for that?

Wife - Don't know why.

Husband - Very strange. Isn't it?

(Silent)

Got it .... Got it...

Wife - What?

Husband - The reason.

Wife - Reason for what?

Husband - For not looking into the eyes. The reason for that. (In a convincing tone)

Look here, my dear chum ... After the marriage I got spects.

Wife - Because of too much reading of newspapers...

Husband - You also got spects because of too much of knitting .. That clinches the matter!

Wife - What do you mean?

Husband - It means, if I look into your eyes, the spects will be broken. Won't they?

Wife - If that's the case, why not remove the spects?

Husband - (Takes his spects off and holds them in his fingers) I removed them. You too will remove them.

Wife - (She also removes) I removed them. See here. Look into my eyes ....

Husband - (Staring emotionally) Aha wonderful eyes! They are glittering like stars! The face around these stars.... Clouds around the face. Aha. Foggy dream, humming song! Oh my wine-eyed damsel!

Wife - Oo.

Husband - Where are you?

Wife - I am here itself... I am near you ... I am in you ....

Husband - If near, come nearer to me. If inside me, come outside of me. Come, embrace me. I don't know in which previous life we came together. But still I haven't forgotten you. Come on ....

Wife - Yes, I'm coming.

(Both of them stretch their arms and fumble for each other, of course, with spects in their hands. Since they cannot see each other, they cross each other and go.)

Husband - (Coming to the end of the stage) Where did you go my wine-eyed damsel? Just now you were here! Did you march from this life to the next?

Wife - (Coming to the end of the stage and turning) I am here only....

Husband - (Putting on the spects hurriedly and turning) Ayyo. What has happened to you? (Rushes towards her) What has happened to your eyes? Why are you behaving like one lost in wilderness? Who are you? Who?

Wife - (Putting on the spects slowly)
It's me .... your wife.
(With these words she goest to the chair and sits)

Husband 0 (Staring at her) Is it so?
(Seeing her, he withdraws and sits on the sofa. Begins to read the newspaper again. The wife starts knitting. Somebody knocks on the door)

What's that?

Wife - That?

Husband - That tapping?

Wife - Oh, that tapping? That's a sound.

Husband - Sound of what?

Wife - That's the sound of tapping.

Husband - Tapping what?

(Who is there in the house? asks a voice)

What does he say?

Wife - He asks as to who is there in the house?

Husband - Are we int eh house now?

Wife - Who the hell knows it?

Husband - Who is he?

Wife - Must be some stranger.

Husband - Why stranter? Must be an acquaintance.

Wife - Acquaintance?

(The Wife clears her throat and starts knitting. The Husband goes towards the door and opens it. Exchanges of 'Is it you?' are heard. Someone comes in the Huisband. He is clad in the ultra-modern garments. A strange lustre of his face. Equally smart in talking. Both of them indluge in gossip without caring for the Wife. The laugh now and then. Signs of intimacy in the laughter...)

Husband - Come in, come in... please. I opened the door expecting a beggar. But strangely enough, it was you.

Person - Yes, I'm coming ... I knocked on the door expecting this to be a charity - house. But strange enough, it happens to be your house!

Husband - I got tired of waiting and waiting.

Person - I too got tired of having kept you waiting.

Husband - Who did you keep waiting)

Person - Who did you wait for?

Husband - I waited for you.

Person - I made you wait for me.

Husband - Now the problem...

Person - Is over.

(They laugh heartily)

Husband - By the way, where are you now?

Person - 'Now' means when?

Husband - 'Now means when' means what?

Person - Do you mean by 'now' this moment, or today or this week or this month or this year or this century or this age?

Husband - I mean this moment.

Person - This moment I'm here.

Husband - This age.

Person - In this age, I had to take my incarnation in this sepulch
Continent of India.

Husband - Is that so?

(Silent. Deep meditation)

Person - (Suddenly falls prostrate at the feet of the Husband) Y
have to uplift me sir.

Husband - Uplife? ... Means what?

Person - I fell on your feet, sir. You have to uplift me.

Husband - (Lifts him by the arms) Is that OK now? Are you uplifte

Person - Yes, sir.

(silence)

Husband - What are you doing now?

Person - I am talking.

Husband - No, not that. What are you now?

Person - I am alive.

Husband - What are you doing now, alive?

Person - Alive, I am talking.

Husband - Is it so?

(Silence. Meditation)

Husband - What are you servind as?

Person - I am serving as the President of India.

Husband - Hma. I got you the post of the President, By the way, how is the climate iof Delhi?

Person - The climate is all right, but Delhi is no good.

Husband - Then how do you manage it?

Person - I shall transfer the capital.

Husband - How'll you do it?

Person - From Delhi ... to my village.

Husband - 'My village' means where?

Person - The village in which I live is my village.

Husband - Pardon? Could you tell me once again?

Person - The village in which I live ....

Husband - Is my village. Correct. The house in which I live...

Person - Is my house. The cemetary in which .....

Husband - I live is my ....

Person - Cemetary.

Husband - What fun is there in it?

Person - Nothing.

(They laugh. Silence)

Person - I have to go now.

Husband - Where?

Person - To Delhi.

Husband - What after going there?

Person - After going to Delhi, I have to go into Delhi.

Husband - Why?

Person - So that it becomes mine.

Husband - So what?

Person - So that it will be easy for me to transfer the capital.

Husband - Yes, yes. You are right.

Person - But you should remember to come there.

Husband - Where?

Person - To Delhi.

Husband - Should I come or go there?

Person - You should go from here while going there and come there while coming there.

Husband - Do you mean there's no difference between coming and going?

Person - Not at all.

Husband - All right. All right.

Person - You can be the President as long as you stay in Delhi.

Husband - Me?

Person - Whether it's you or me makes no difference ...

Husband - Where'll you be then?

Person - Then I'll be in my village.

Husband - Where'll your village be?

Person - My village will be inside Delhi.

Husband - Where'll be Delhi?

Person - Delhi'll be outside my viallage.

Husband - All right...

Person - Are you satisfied now? My bodyguards are coming now. I

have to take leave of you.

(Whispering near the door... 'This fellow must have gone into the house'. 'It's very difficult to tolerate this fellow.' 'Come on, let's go in ...' and other broken sentences.)

Please come to Delhi. while coming ....

(His attention is directed to the Wife)

Who's this ...?

Husband - By the way ... Didn't I introduce her to you? She is .. She is ...

(He does not remember .... He put on the spects and stares at her... She also stops knitting and starts staring at him.)

She is ... She is ... I shall introduce at least her eyes to you... Her eyes ... Her eyes....

(He goes very near her and looks into her eyes. In a nervous voce)

Ayyayyo.. Where are her eyes? Her eyes are dead!.. And have become a ghost.. And have become the eyes of the ghost and say 'I shall devour you.'....

(While the Husband is still speaking, three persons come from outside and stand to the right, left and front of the Person ion the manner of bodyguards. The Person goes out with the dignity of the President of India followied by them.)

Curtain

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